MASS EFFECT™

THE COMPLETE COMICS

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Illustration by Benjamin Carré

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MASS EFFECT: THE COMPLETE COMICS

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REDEMPTION

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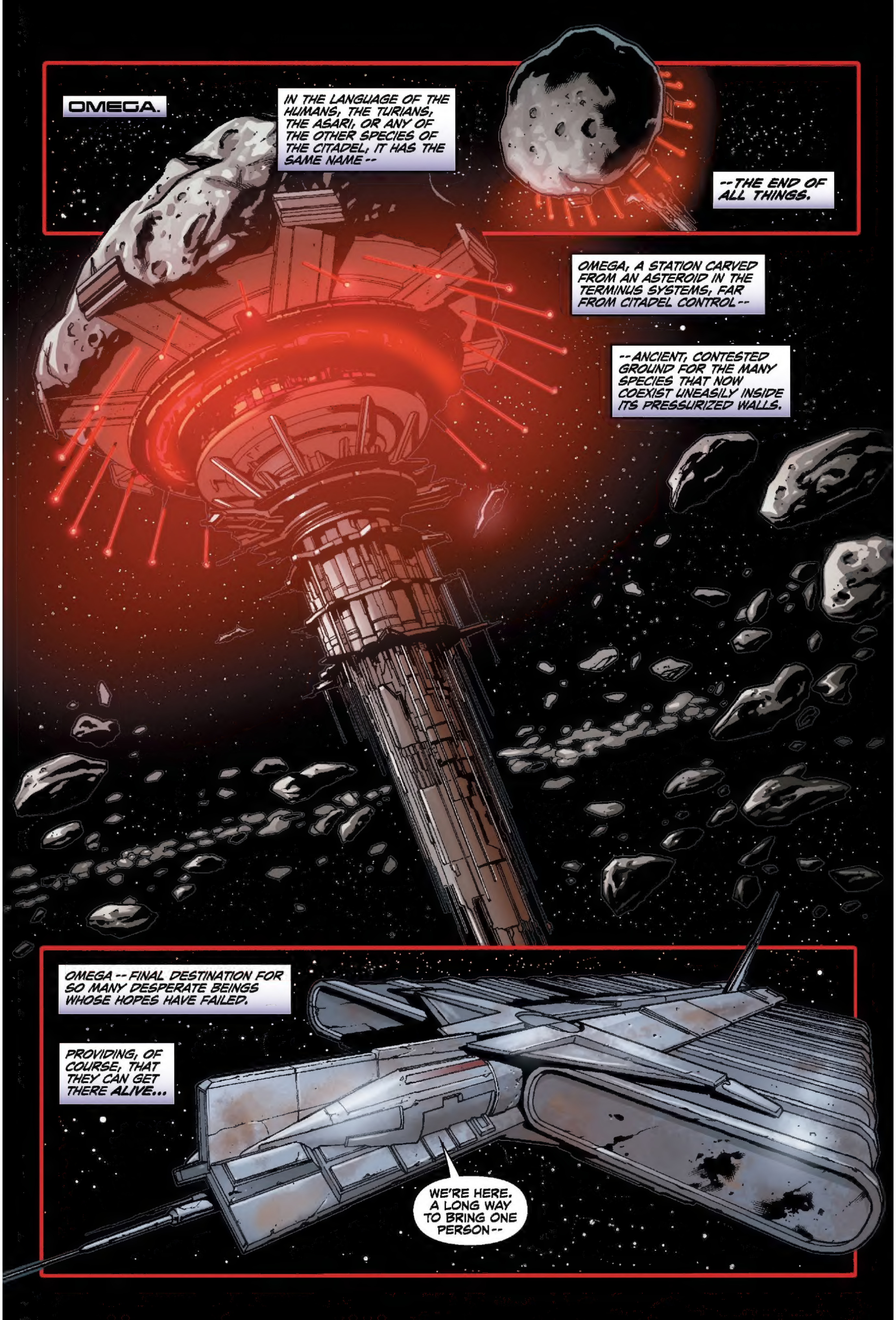
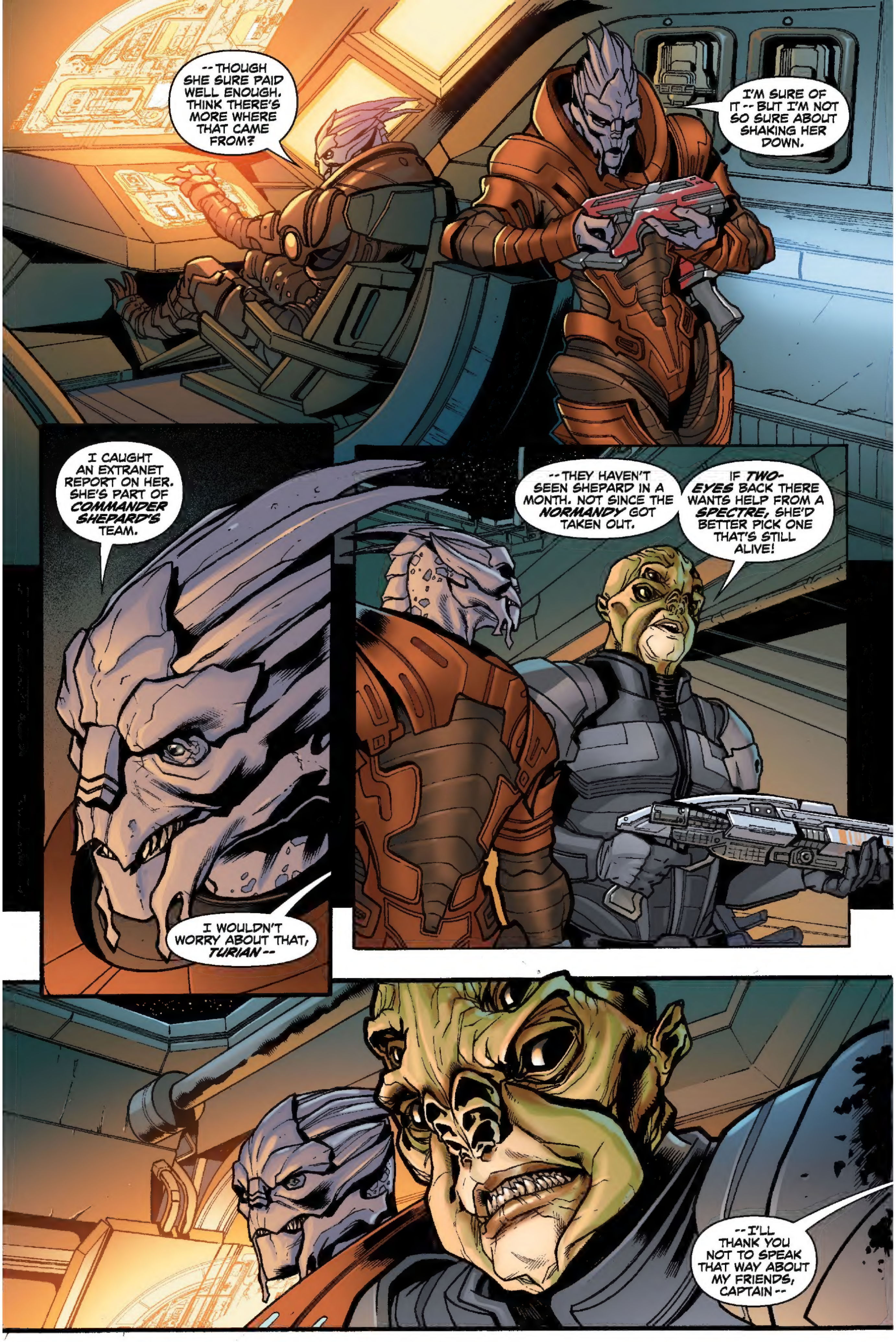
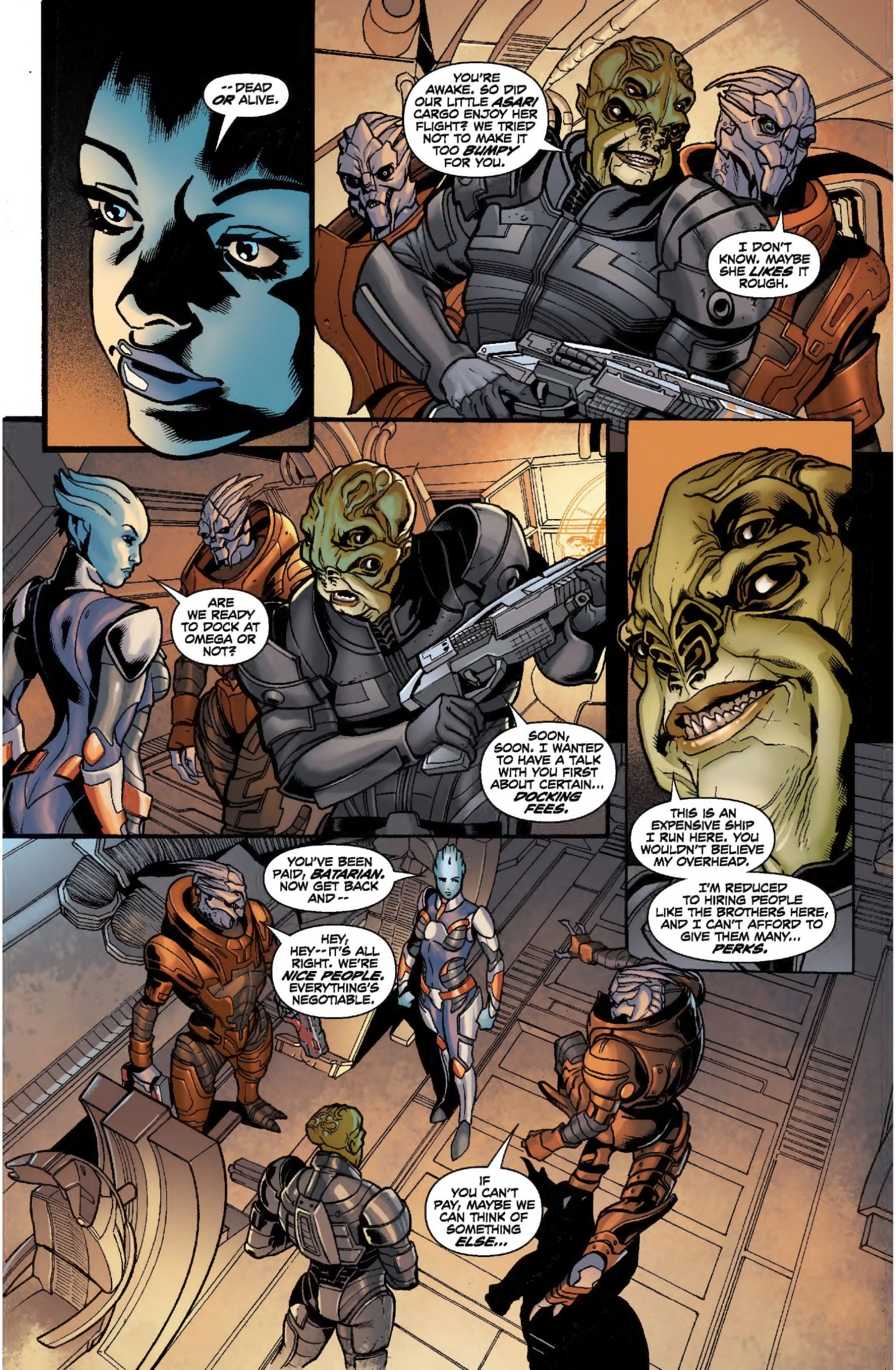
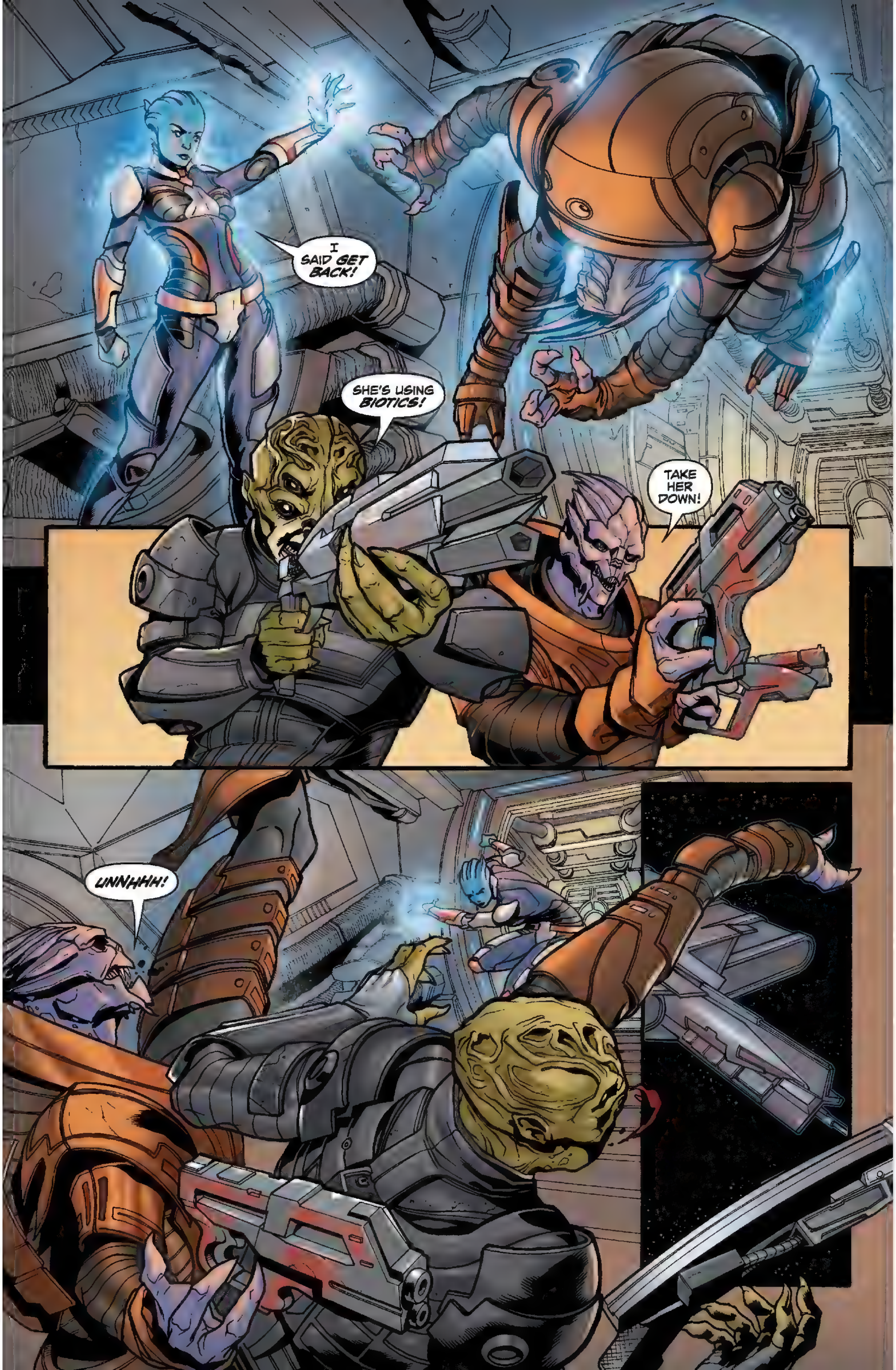
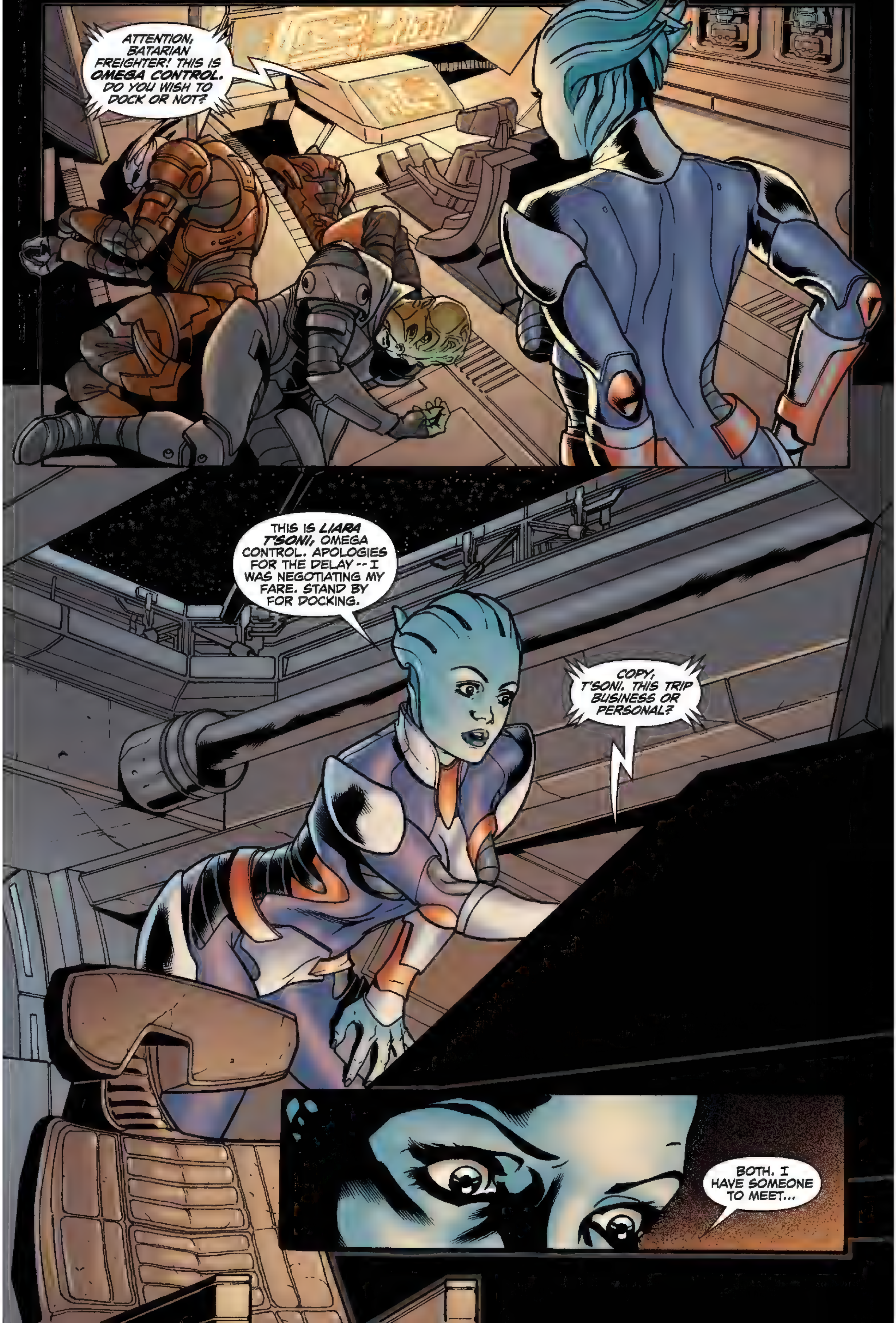
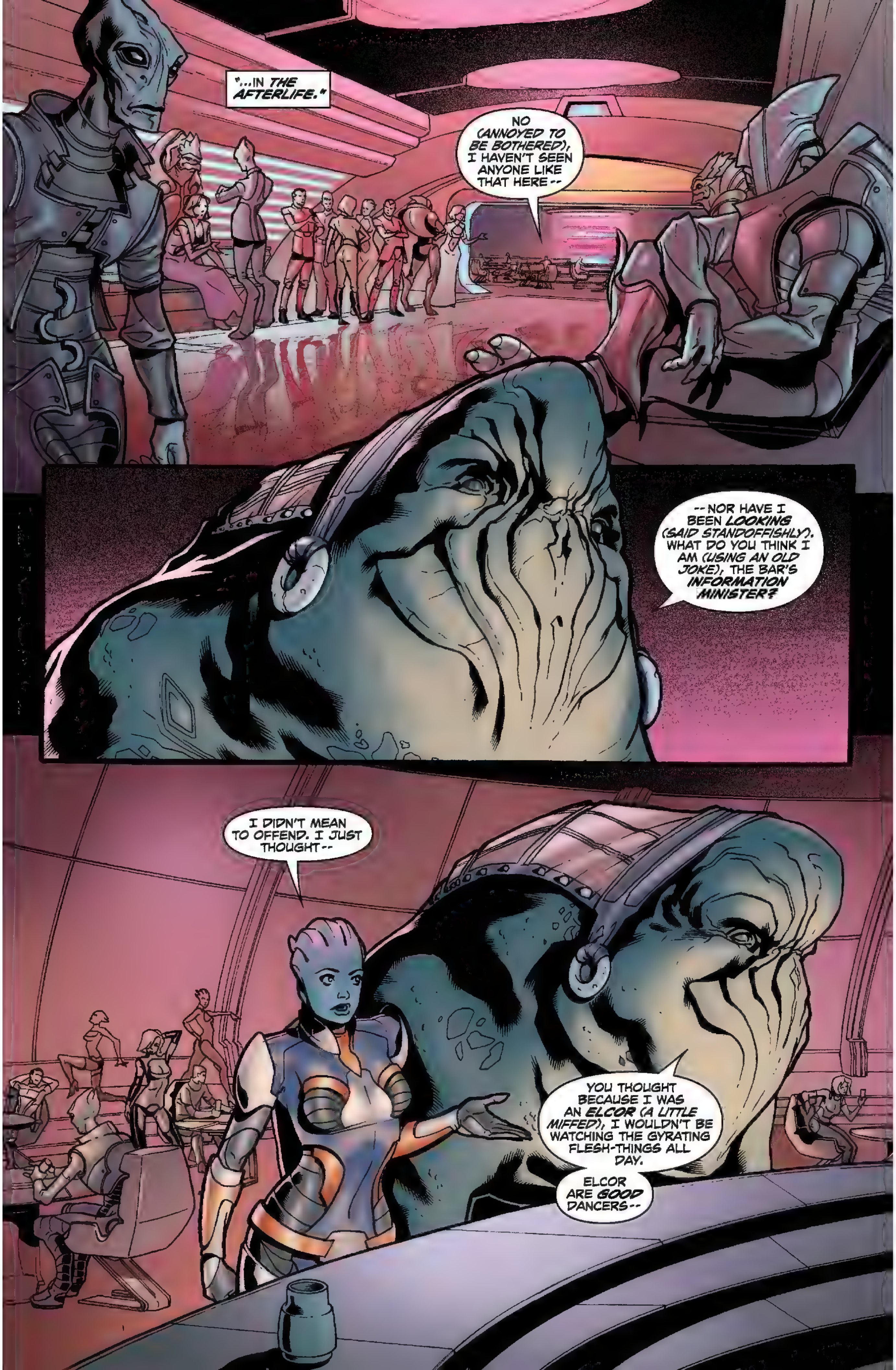

OMEGA.
IN THE LANGUAGE OF THE HUMANS, THE TURIANS, THE ASARI, OR ANY OF THE OTHER SPECIES OF THE CITADEL, IT HAS THE SAME NAME--
--THE END OF ALL THINGS.
OMEGA, A STATION CARVED FROM AN ASTEROID IN THE TERMINUS SYSTEMS, FAR FROM CITADEL CONTROL--
--ANCIENT, CONTESTED GROUND FOR THE MANY SPECIES THAT NOW COEXIST UNEASILY INSIDE ITS PRESSURIZED WALLS.
OMEGA--FINAL DESTINATION FOR SO MANY DESPERATE BEINGS WHOSE HOPES HAVE FAILED.
PROVIDING, OF COURSE, THAT THEY CAN GET THERE ALIVE...
WE'RE HERE. A LONG WAY TO BRING ONE PERSON--

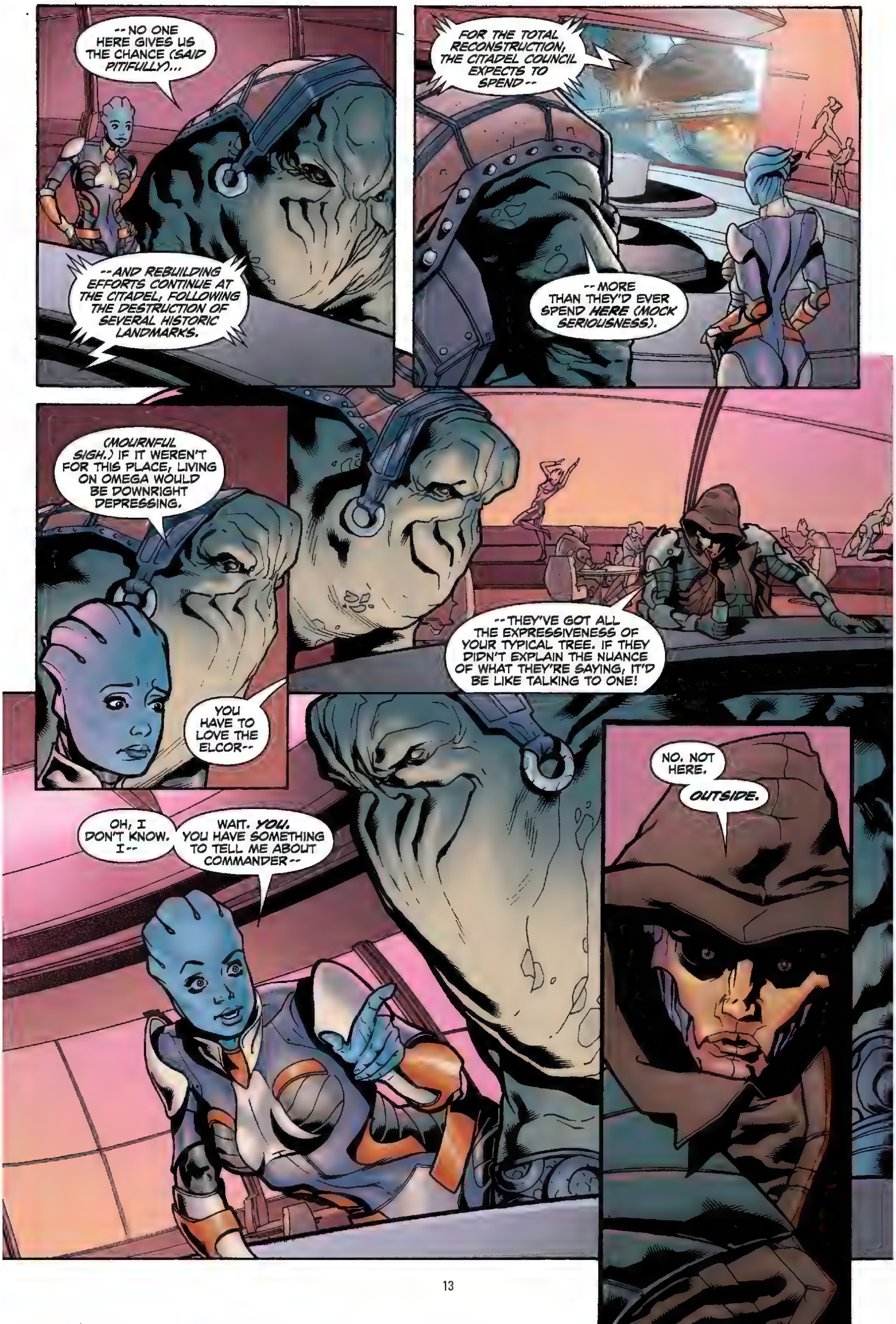

--THOUGH SHE SURE PAID WELL ENOUGH. THINK THERE'S MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM?
I'M SURE OF IT -- BUT I'M NOT SO SURE ABOUT SHAKING HER DOWN.
I CAUGHT AN EXTRANET REPORT ON HER. SHE'S PART OF ***COMMANDER SHEPARD'S*** TEAM.
--THEY HAVEN'T SEEN SHEPARD IN A MONTH. NOT SINCE THE ***NORMANDY*** GOT TAKEN OUT.
IF ***TWO-EYES*** BACK THERE WANTS HELP FROM A ***SPECTRE,*** SHE'D BETTER PICK ONE THAT'S STILL ALIVE!
I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT THAT, ***TURIAN***--
--I'LL THANK YOU NOT TO SPEAK THAT WAY ABOUT MY FRIENDS, CAPTAIN--

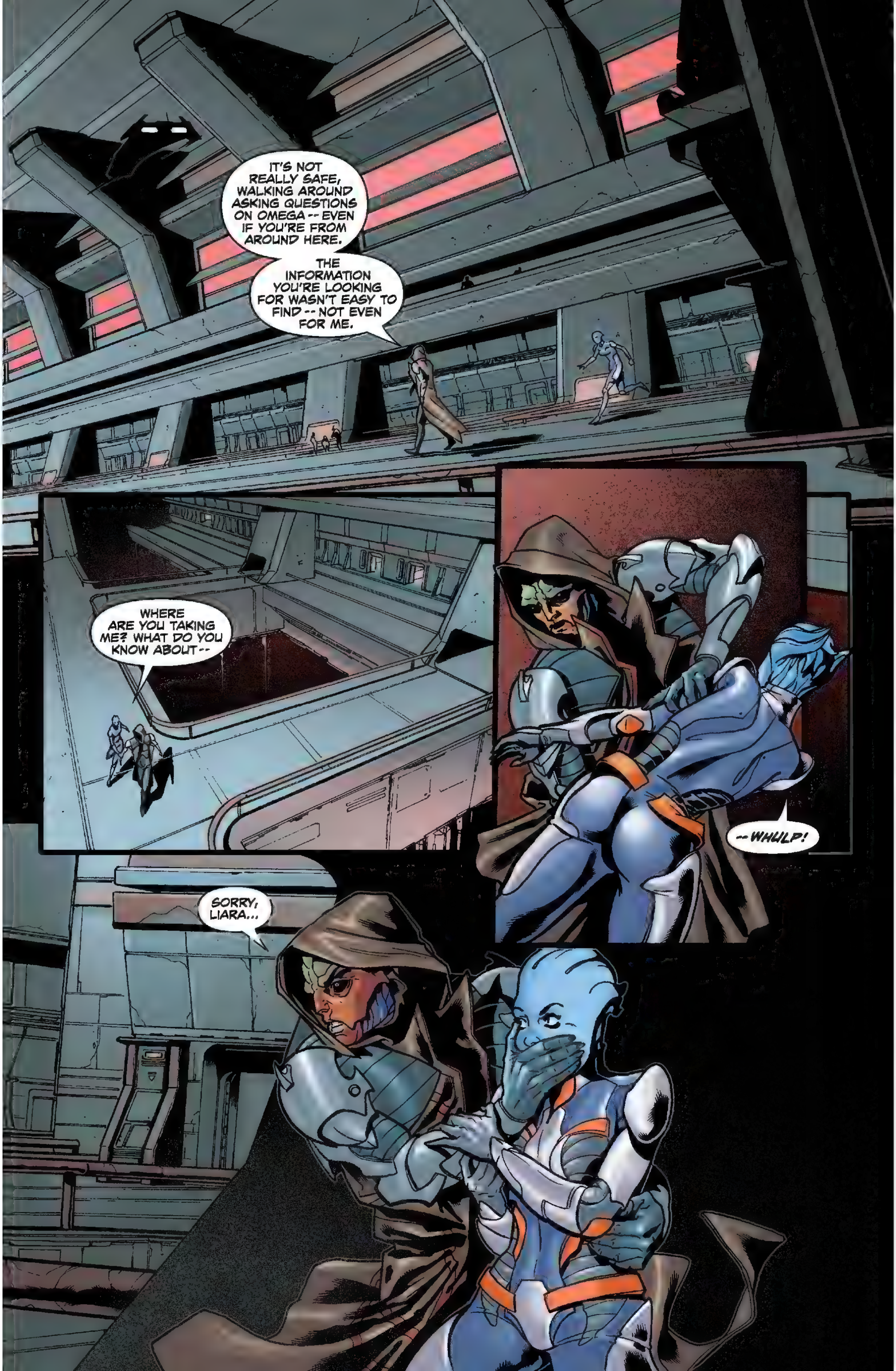

--DEAD *OR* ALIVE.
YOU'RE AWAKE. SO DID OUR LITTLE *ASARI* CARGO ENJOY HER FLIGHT? WE TRIED NOT TO MAKE IT TOO *BUMPY* FOR YOU.
I DON'T KNOW. MAYBE SHE *LIKES* IT ROUGH.
ARE WE READY TO DOCK AT OMEGA OR NOT?
SOON, SOON. I WANTED TO HAVE A TALK WITH YOU FIRST ABOUT CERTAIN... *DOCKING FEES.*
THIS IS AN EXPENSIVE SHIP I RUN HERE. YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE MY OVERHEAD.
I'M REDUCED TO HIRING PEOPLE LIKE THE BROTHERS HERE, AND I CAN'T AFFORD TO GIVE THEM MANY... *PERKS.*
YOU'VE BEEN PAID, *BATARIAN.* NOW GET BACK AND--
HEY, HEY--IT'S ALL RIGHT. WE'RE *NICE PEOPLE.* EVERYTHING'S NEGOTIABLE.
IF YOU CAN'T PAY, MAYBE WE CAN THINK OF SOMETHING *ELSE...*

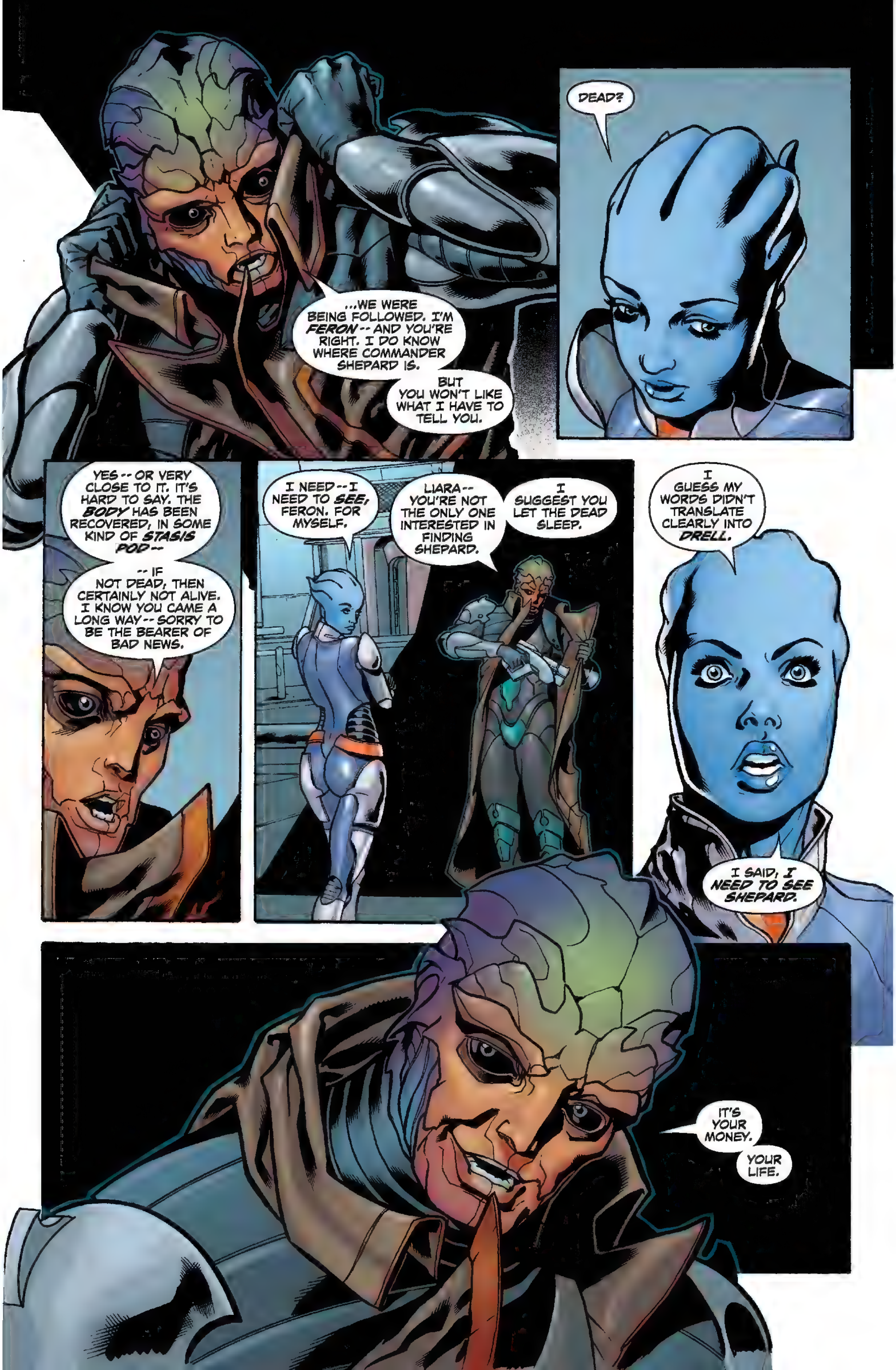

I SAID *GET BACK!*
SHE'S USING *BIOTICS!*
TAKE HER DOWN!
UNNHHH!

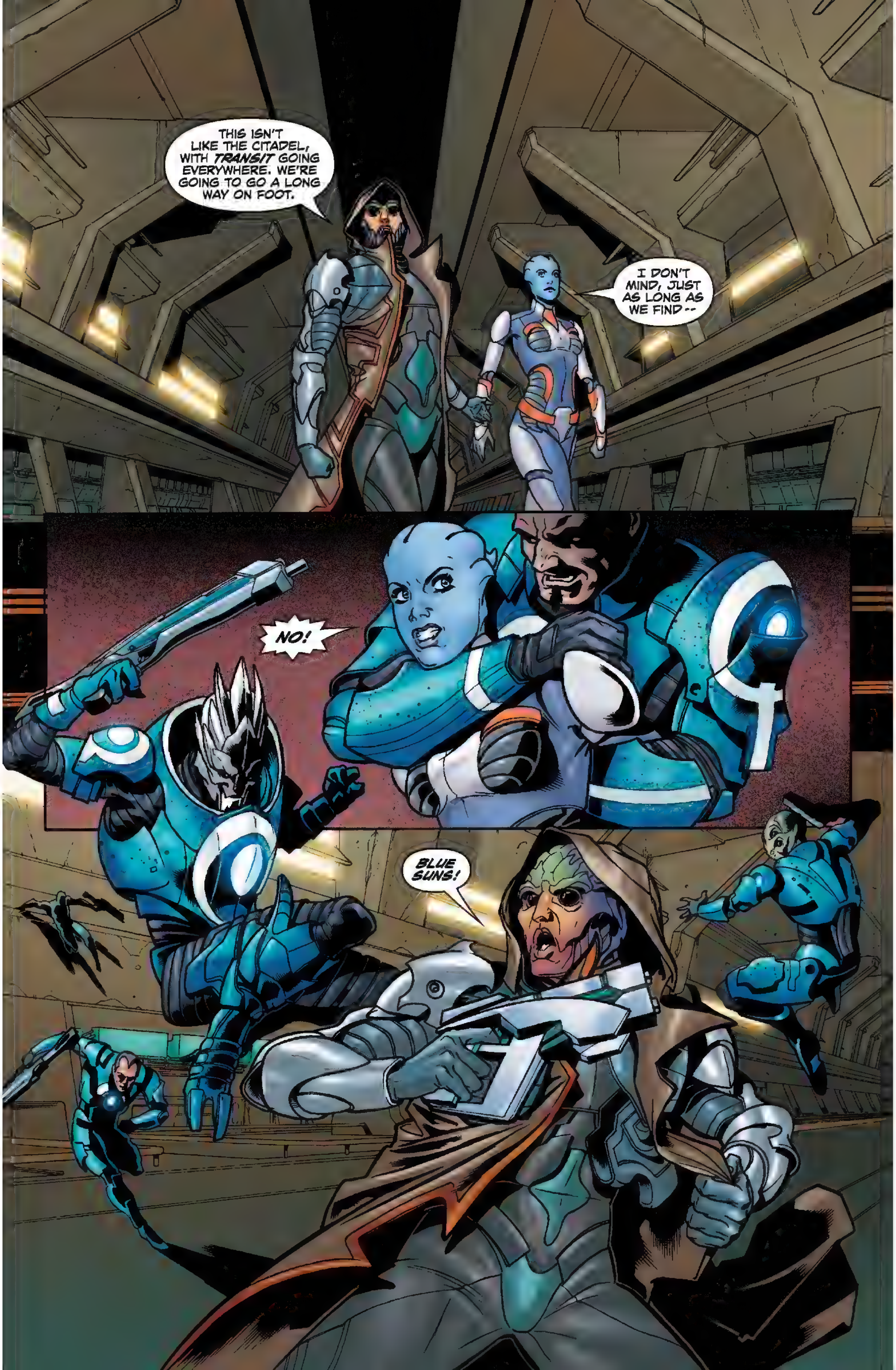

ATTENTION, BATARIAN FREIGHTER! THIS IS OMEGA CONTROL. DO YOU WISH TO DOCK OR NOT?
THIS IS LIARA T'SONI, OMEGA CONTROL. APOLOGIES FOR THE DELAY -- I WAS NEGOTIATING MY FARE. STAND BY FOR DOCKING.
COPY, T'SONI. THIS TRIP BUSINESS OR PERSONAL?
BOTH. I HAVE SOMEONE TO MEET...

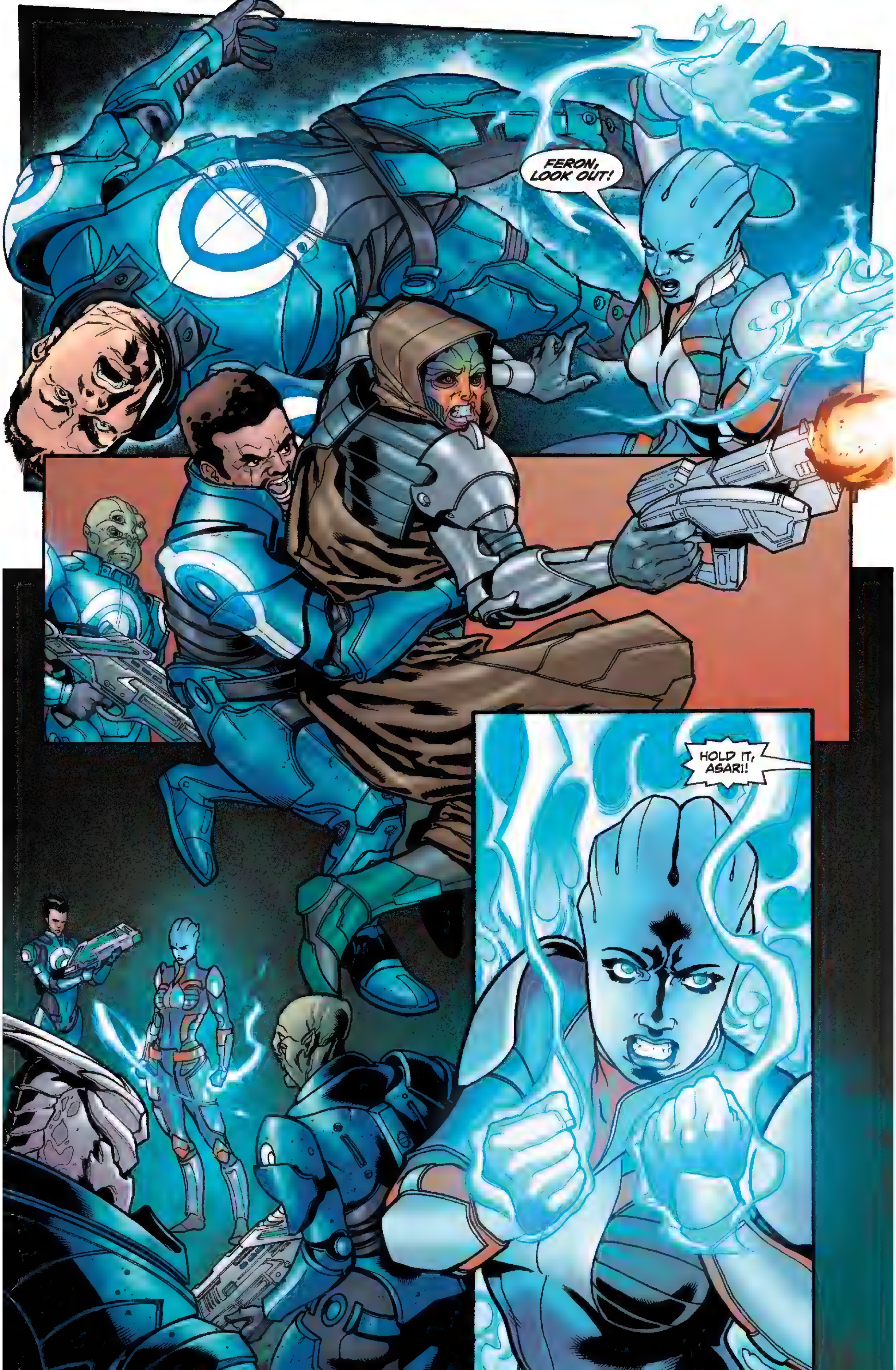

"...IN *THE AFTERLIFE.*"
NO (*ANNOYED TO BE BOTHERED*), I HAVEN'T SEEN ANYONE LIKE THAT HERE--
--NOR HAVE I BEEN *LOOKING* (*SAID STANDOFFISHLY*). WHAT DO YOU THINK I AM (*USING AN OLD JOKE*), THE BAR'S *INFORMATION MINISTER?*
I DIDN'T MEAN TO OFFEND. I JUST THOUGHT--
YOU THOUGHT BECAUSE I WAS AN *ELCOR* (*A LITTLE MIFFED*), I WOULDN'T BE WATCHING THE GYRATING FLESH-THINGS ALL DAY.
ELCOR ARE *GOOD* DANCERS--

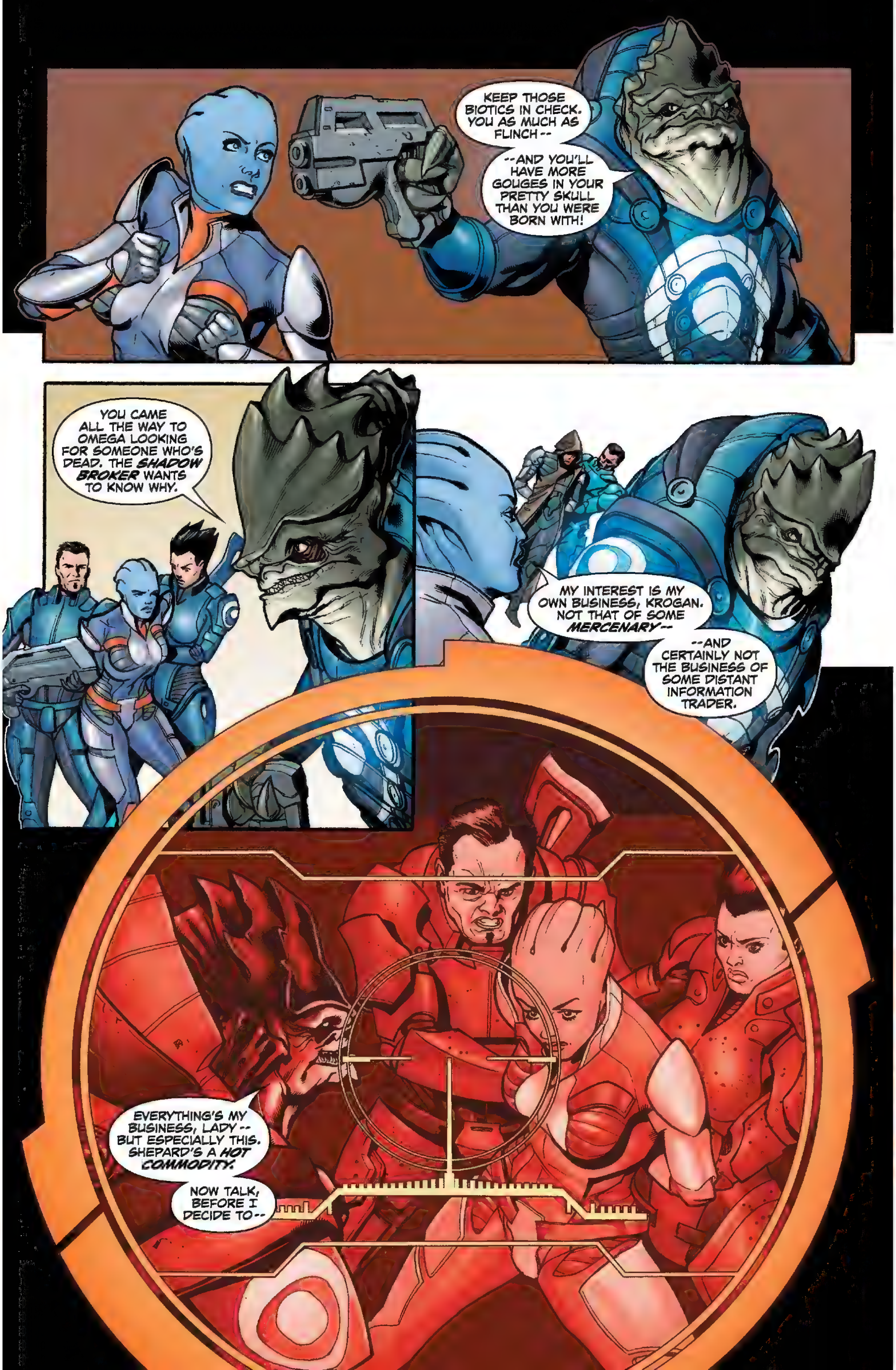

--NO ONE HERE GIVES US THE CHANCE (SAID PITIFULLY)...
--AND REBUILDING EFFORTS CONTINUE AT THE CITADEL, FOLLOWING THE DESTRUCTION OF SEVERAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS.
FOR THE TOTAL RECONSTRUCTION, THE CITADEL COUNCIL EXPECTS TO SPEND--
--MORE THAN THEY'D EVER SPEND HERE (MOCK SERIOUSNESS).
(MOURNFUL SIGH.) IF IT WEREN'T FOR THIS PLACE, LIVING ON OMEGA WOULD BE DOWNRIGHT DEPRESSING.
YOU HAVE TO LOVE THE ELCOR--
--THEY'VE GOT ALL THE EXPRESSIVENESS OF YOUR TYPICAL TREE. IF THEY DIDN'T EXPLAIN THE NUANCE OF WHAT THEY'RE SAYING, IT'D BE LIKE TALKING TO ONE!
OH, I DON'T KNOW. I--
WAIT. YOU. YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL ME ABOUT COMMANDER--
NO. NOT HERE.
OUTSIDE.

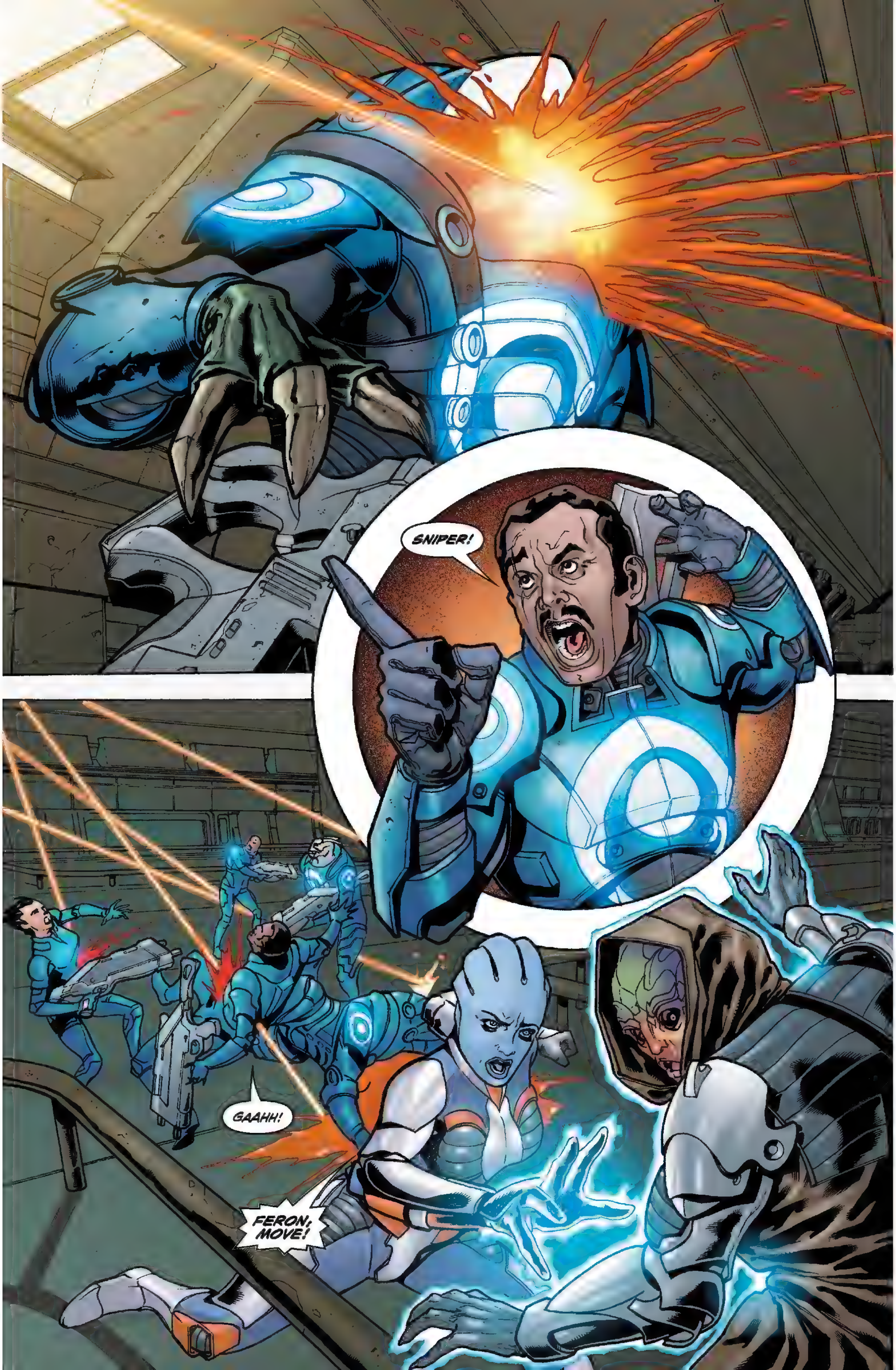

IT'S NOT REALLY SAFE, WALKING AROUND ASKING QUESTIONS ON OMEGA -- EVEN IF YOU'RE FROM AROUND HERE.
THE INFORMATION YOU'RE LOOKING FOR WASN'T EASY TO FIND -- NOT EVEN FOR ME.
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING ME? WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT --
-- WHULP!
SORRY, LIARA...

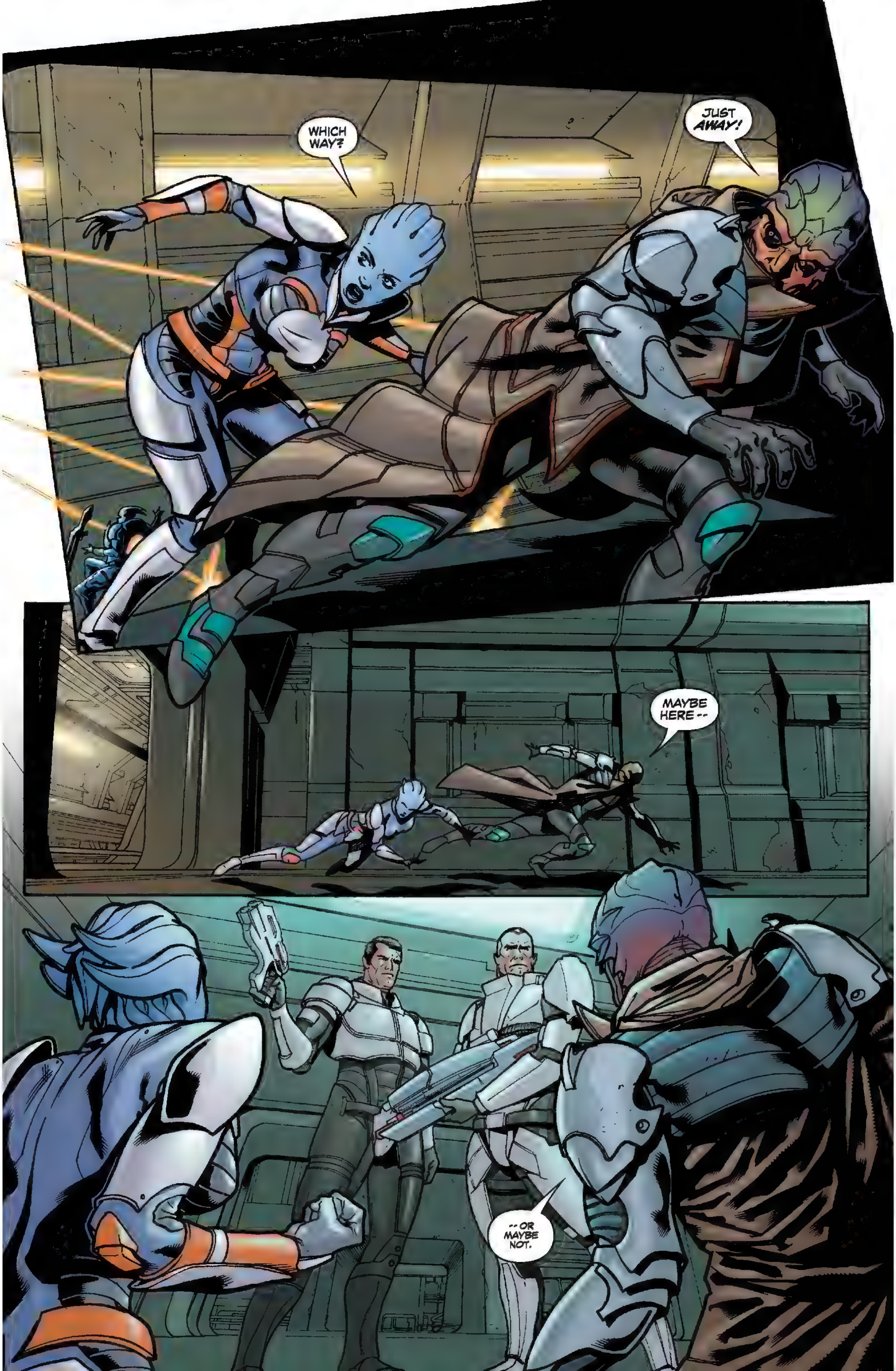

...WE WERE BEING FOLLOWED. I'M *FERON* -- AND YOU'RE RIGHT. I DO KNOW WHERE COMMANDER SHEPARD IS.
BUT YOU WON'T LIKE WHAT I HAVE TO TELL YOU.
DEAD?
YES -- OR VERY CLOSE TO IT. IT'S HARD TO SAY. THE *BODY* HAS BEEN RECOVERED, IN SOME KIND OF *STASIS POD* --
-- IF NOT DEAD, THEN CERTAINLY NOT ALIVE. I KNOW YOU CAME A LONG WAY -- SORRY TO BE THE BEARER OF BAD NEWS.
I NEED -- I NEED TO *SEE,* FERON. FOR MYSELF.
LIARA -- YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE INTERESTED IN FINDING SHEPARD.
I SUGGEST YOU LET THE DEAD SLEEP.
I GUESS MY WORDS DIDN'T TRANSLATE CLEARLY INTO *DRELL.*
I SAID, *I NEED TO SEE SHEPARD.*
IT'S YOUR MONEY.
YOUR LIFE.

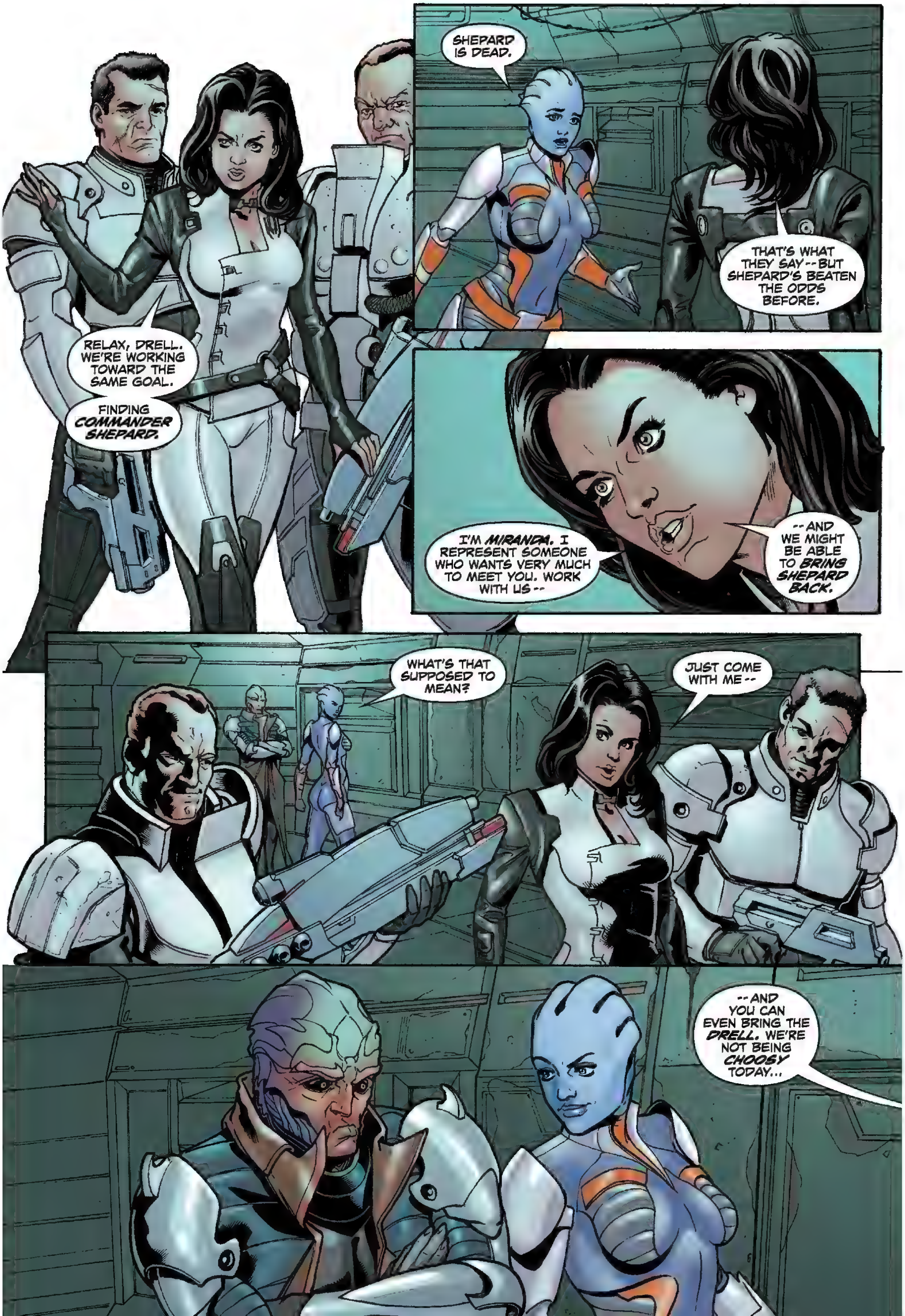

THIS ISN'T LIKE THE CITADEL, WITH *TRANSIT* GOING EVERYWHERE. WE'RE GOING TO GO A LONG WAY ON FOOT.
I DON'T MIND, JUST AS LONG AS WE FIND --
NO!
BLUE SUNS!

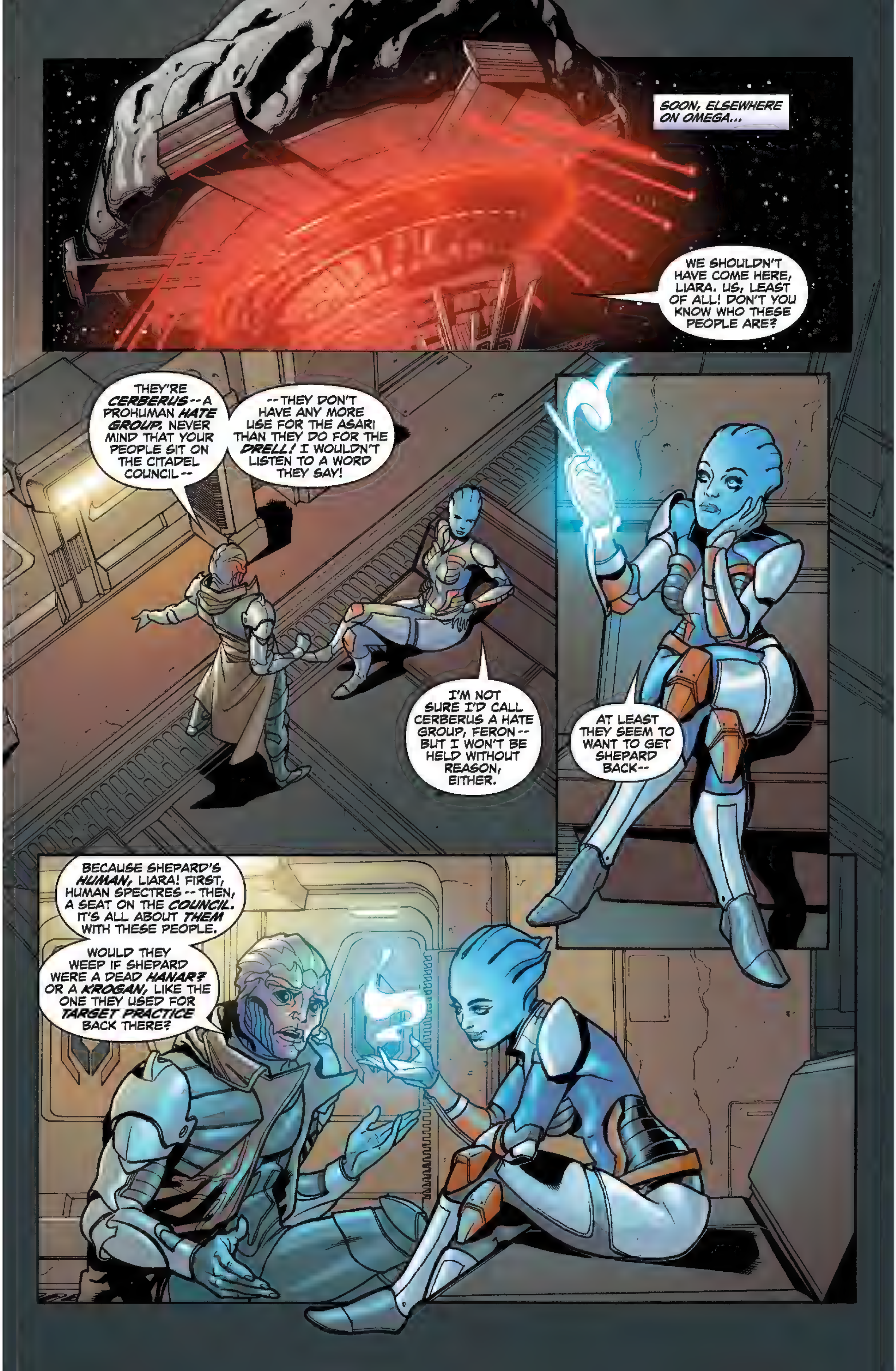

FERON, LOOK OUT!
HOLD IT, ASARI!

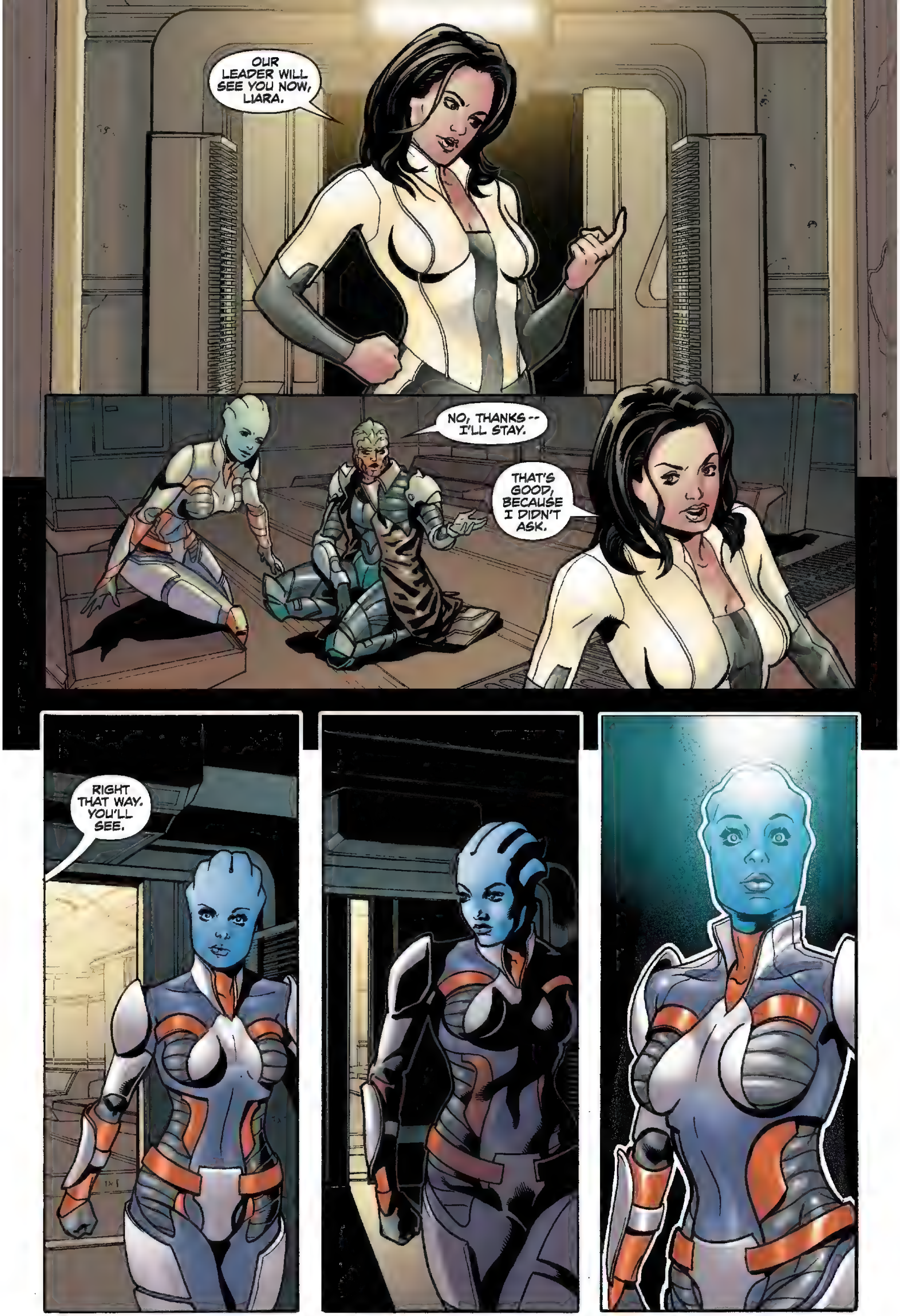

KEEP THOSE BIOTICS IN CHECK. YOU AS MUCH AS FLINCH --
--AND YOU'LL HAVE MORE GOUGES IN YOUR PRETTY SKULL THAN YOU WERE BORN WITH!
YOU CAME ALL THE WAY TO OMEGA LOOKING FOR SOMEONE WHO'S DEAD. THE ***SHADOW BROKER*** WANTS TO KNOW WHY.
MY INTEREST IS MY OWN BUSINESS, KROGAN. NOT THAT OF SOME ***MERCENARY***--
--AND CERTAINLY NOT THE BUSINESS OF SOME DISTANT INFORMATION TRADER.
EVERYTHING'S MY BUSINESS, LADY -- BUT ESPECIALLY THIS. SHEPARD'S A ***HOT COMMODITY.***
NOW TALK, BEFORE I DECIDE TO--

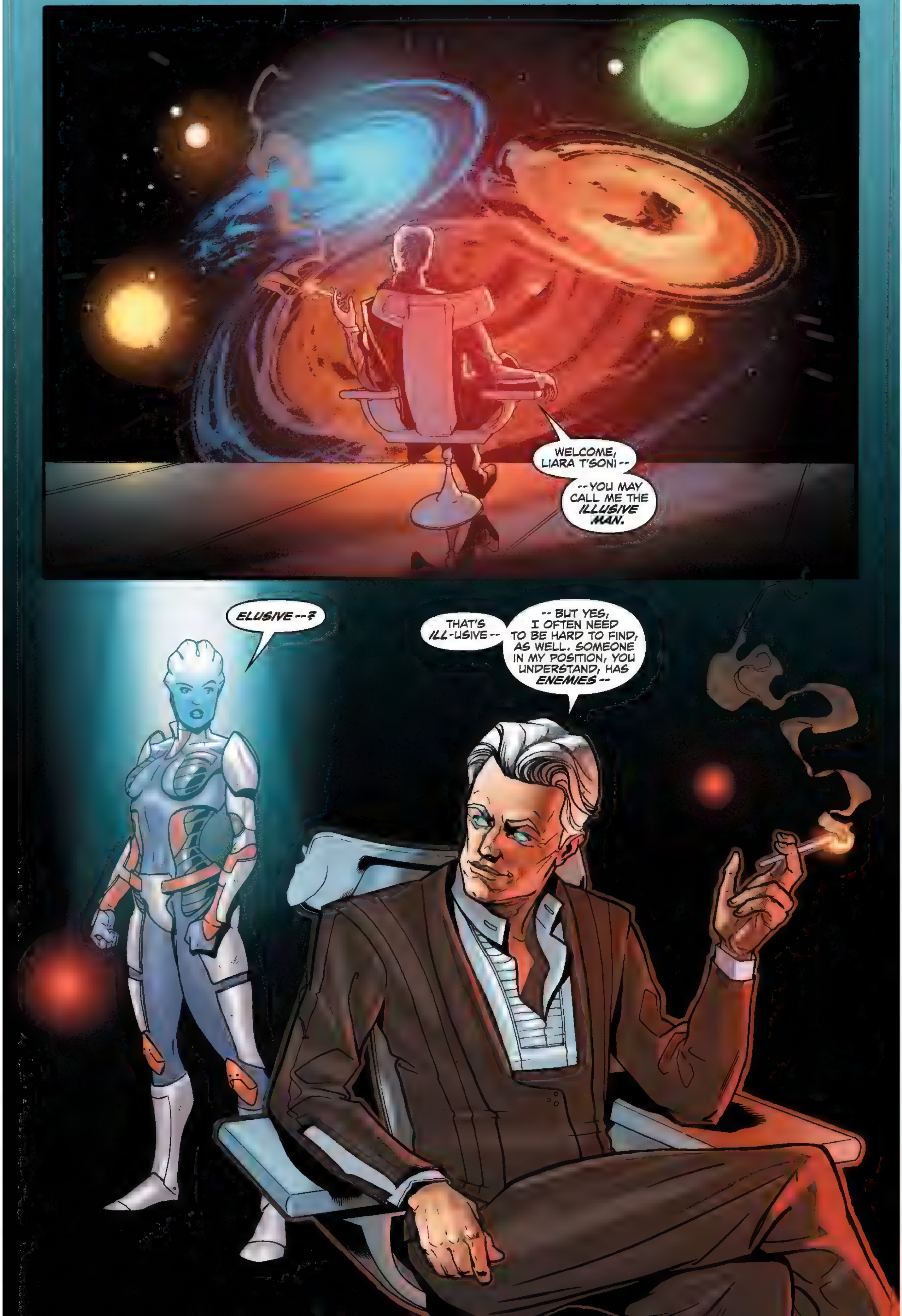

SNIPER!
GAAHH!
FERON, MOVE!

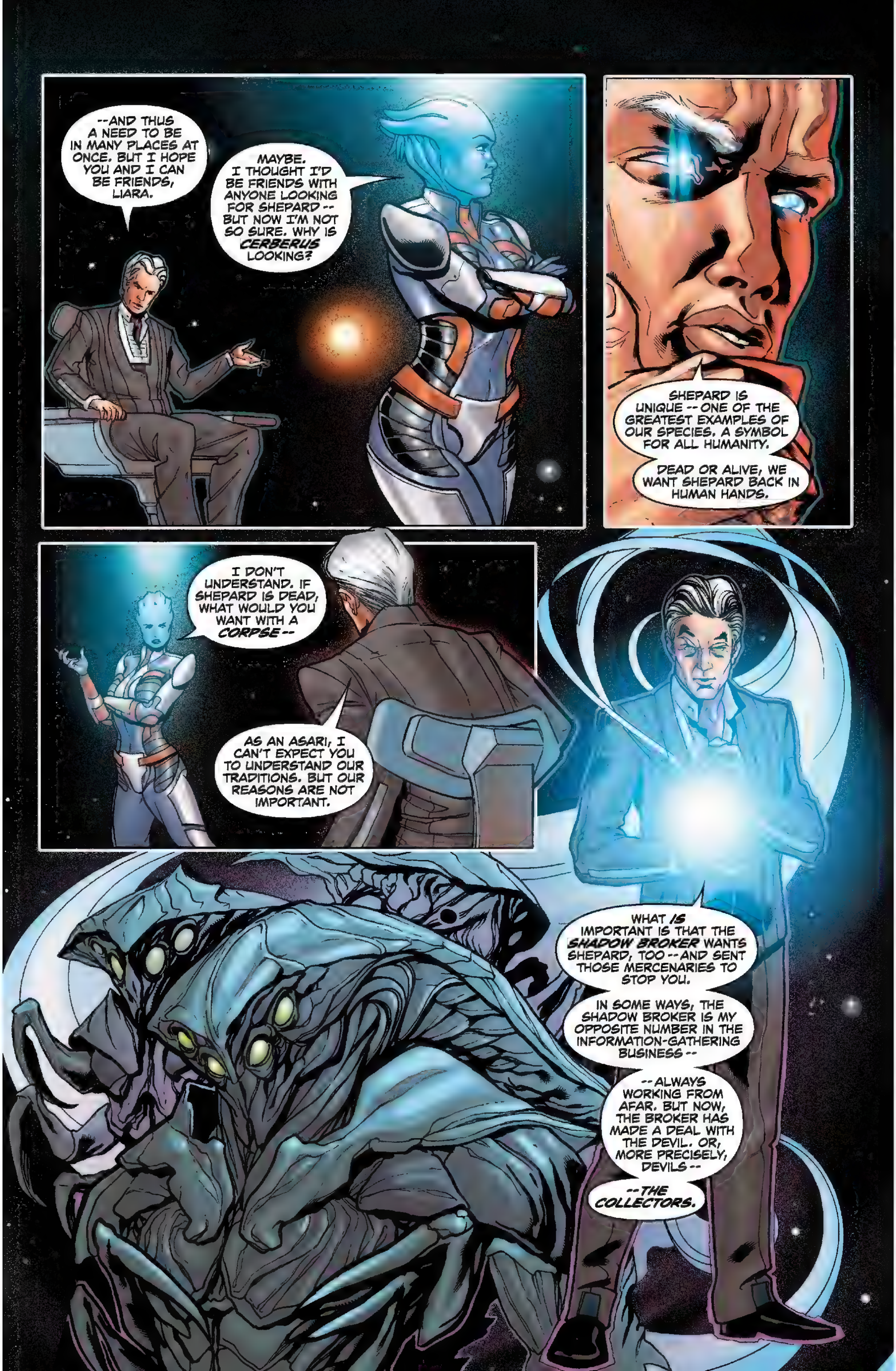

WHICH WAY?
JUST AWAY!
MAYBE HERE --
-- OR MAYBE NOT.

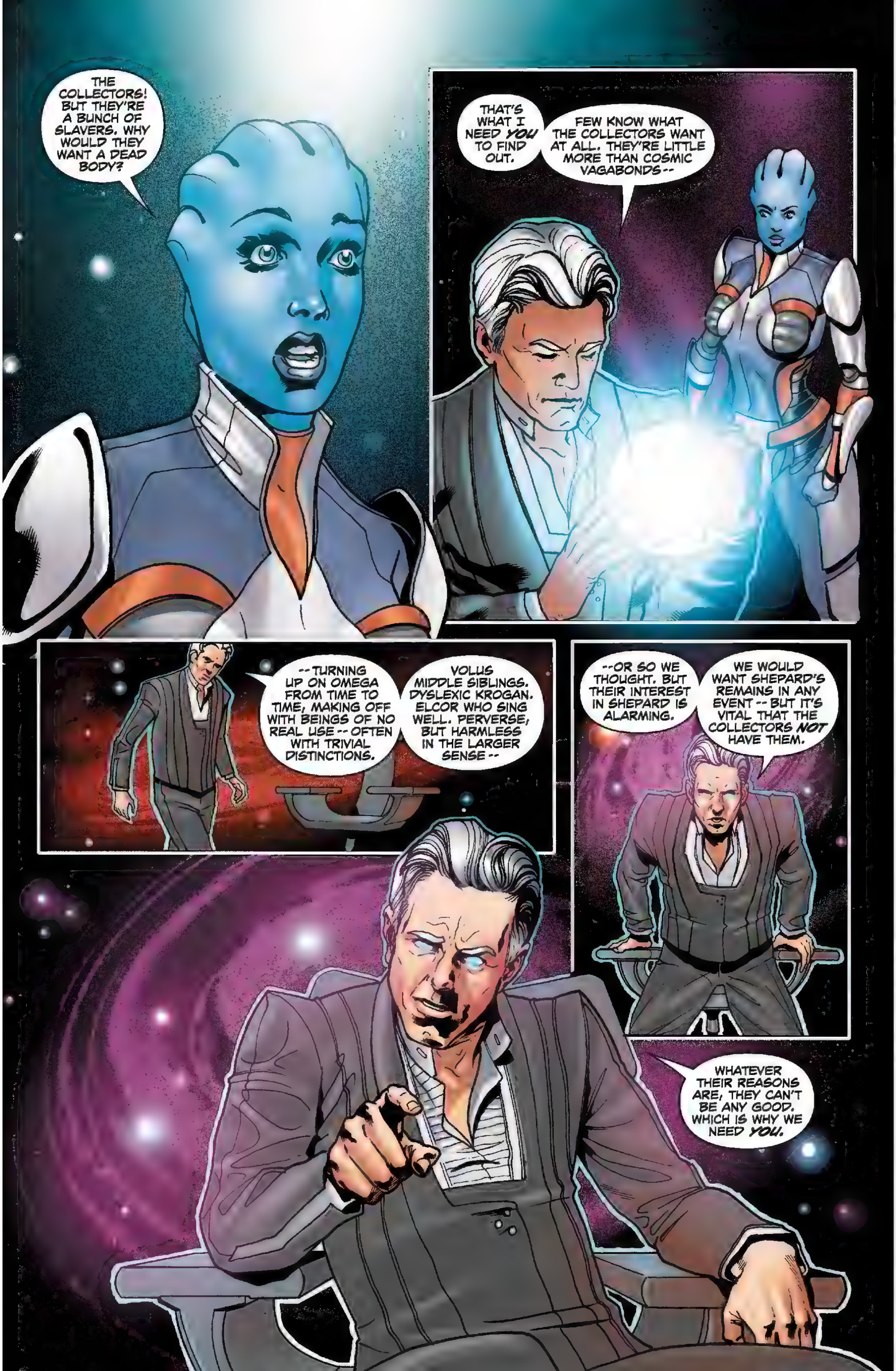

SHEPARD IS DEAD.
THAT'S WHAT THEY SAY--BUT SHEPARD'S BEATEN THE ODDS BEFORE.
RELAX, DRELL. WE'RE WORKING TOWARD THE SAME GOAL.
FINDING *COMMANDER SHEPARD.*
I'M *MIRANDA.* I REPRESENT SOMEONE WHO WANTS VERY MUCH TO MEET YOU. WORK WITH US--
--AND WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO *BRING SHEPARD BACK.*
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
JUST COME WITH ME--
--AND YOU CAN EVEN BRING THE *DRELL.* WE'RE NOT BEING *CHOOSY* TODAY...

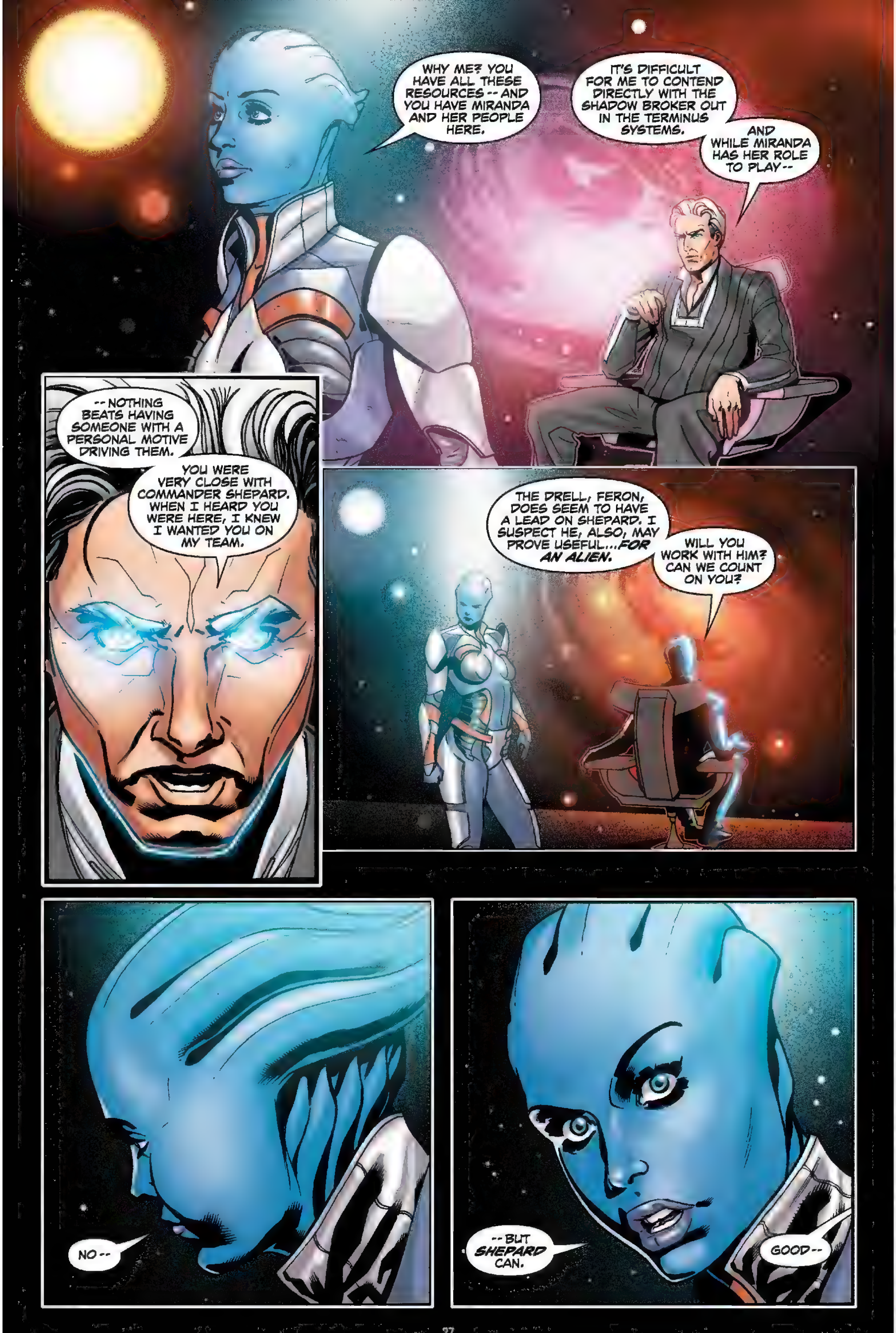

SOON, ELSEWHERE ON OMEGA...
WE SHOULDN'T HAVE COME HERE, LIARA. US, LEAST OF ALL! DON'T YOU KNOW WHO THESE PEOPLE ARE?
THEY'RE *CERBERUS*--A PROHUMAN *HATE GROUP*. NEVER MIND THAT YOUR PEOPLE SIT ON THE CITADEL COUNCIL--
--THEY DON'T HAVE ANY MORE USE FOR THE ASARI THAN THEY DO FOR THE *DRELL!* I WOULDN'T LISTEN TO A WORD THEY SAY!
I'M NOT SURE I'D CALL CERBERUS A HATE GROUP, FERON--BUT I WON'T BE HELD WITHOUT REASON, EITHER.
AT LEAST THEY SEEM TO WANT TO GET SHEPARD BACK--
BECAUSE SHEPARD'S *HUMAN*, LIARA! FIRST, HUMAN SPECTRES--THEN, A SEAT ON THE *COUNCIL*. IT'S ALL ABOUT *THEM* WITH THESE PEOPLE.
WOULD THEY WEEP IF SHEPARD WERE A DEAD *HANAR?* OR A *KROGAN*, LIKE THE ONE THEY USED FOR *TARGET PRACTICE* BACK THERE?

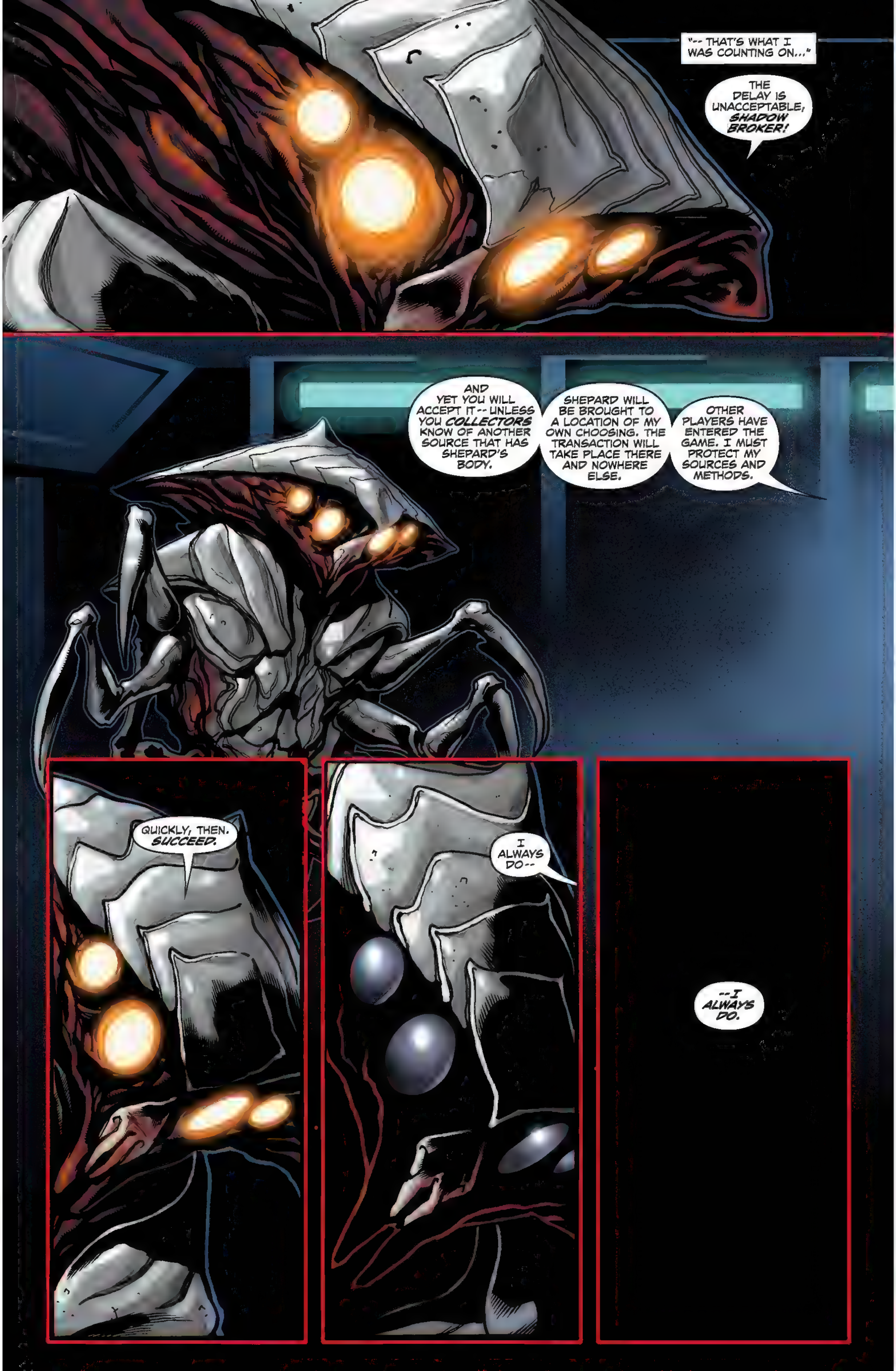

OUR LEADER WILL SEE YOU NOW, LIARA.
NO, THANKS -- I'LL STAY.
THAT'S GOOD, BECAUSE I DIDN'T ASK.
RIGHT THAT WAY. YOU'LL SEE.

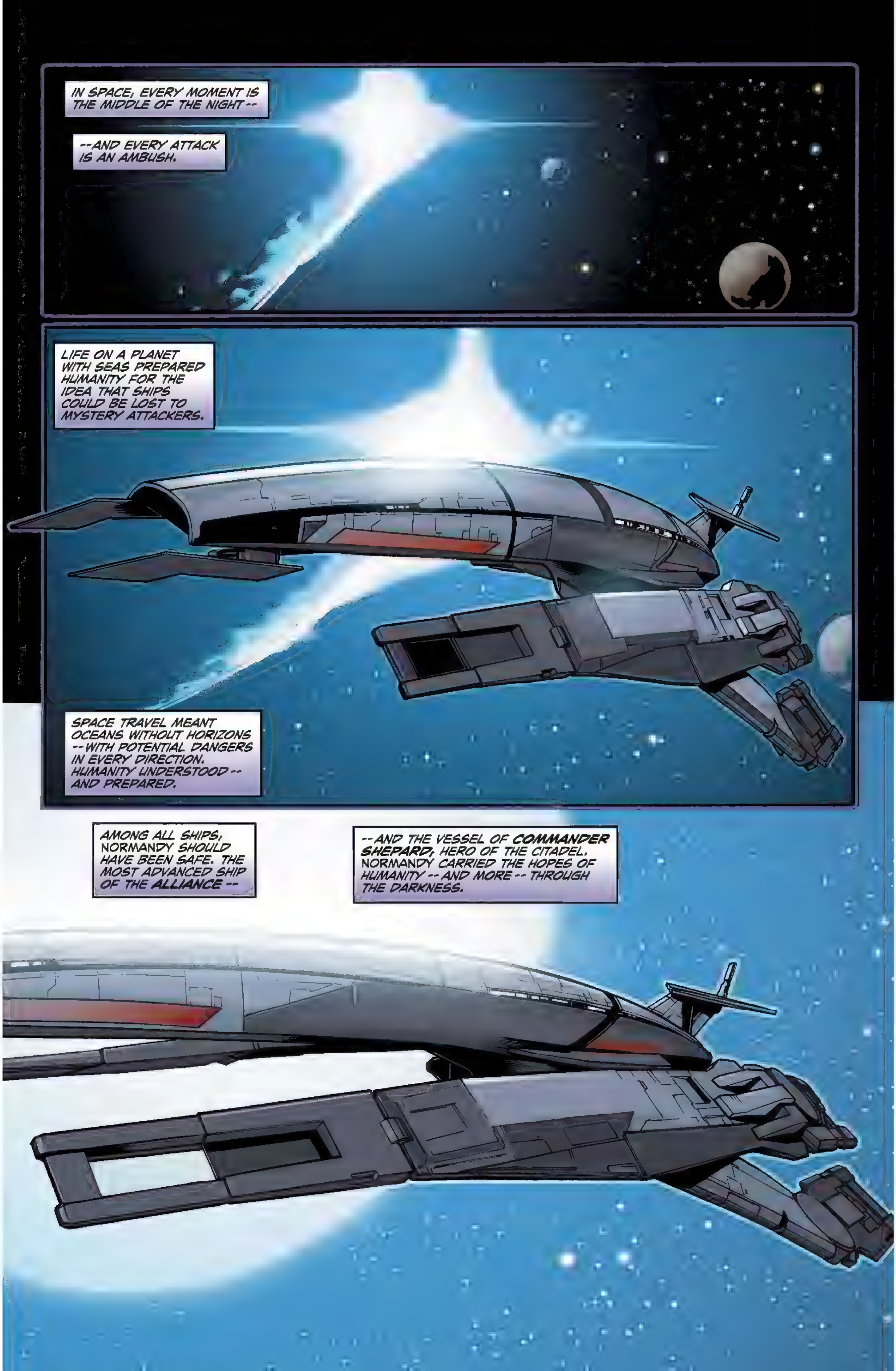

WELCOME, LIARA T'SONI --
-- YOU MAY CALL ME THE *ILLUSIVE MAN.*
ELUSIVE --?
THAT'S *ILL*-USIVE --
-- BUT YES, I OFTEN NEED TO BE HARD TO FIND, AS WELL. SOMEONE IN MY POSITION, YOU UNDERSTAND, HAS *ENEMIES* --

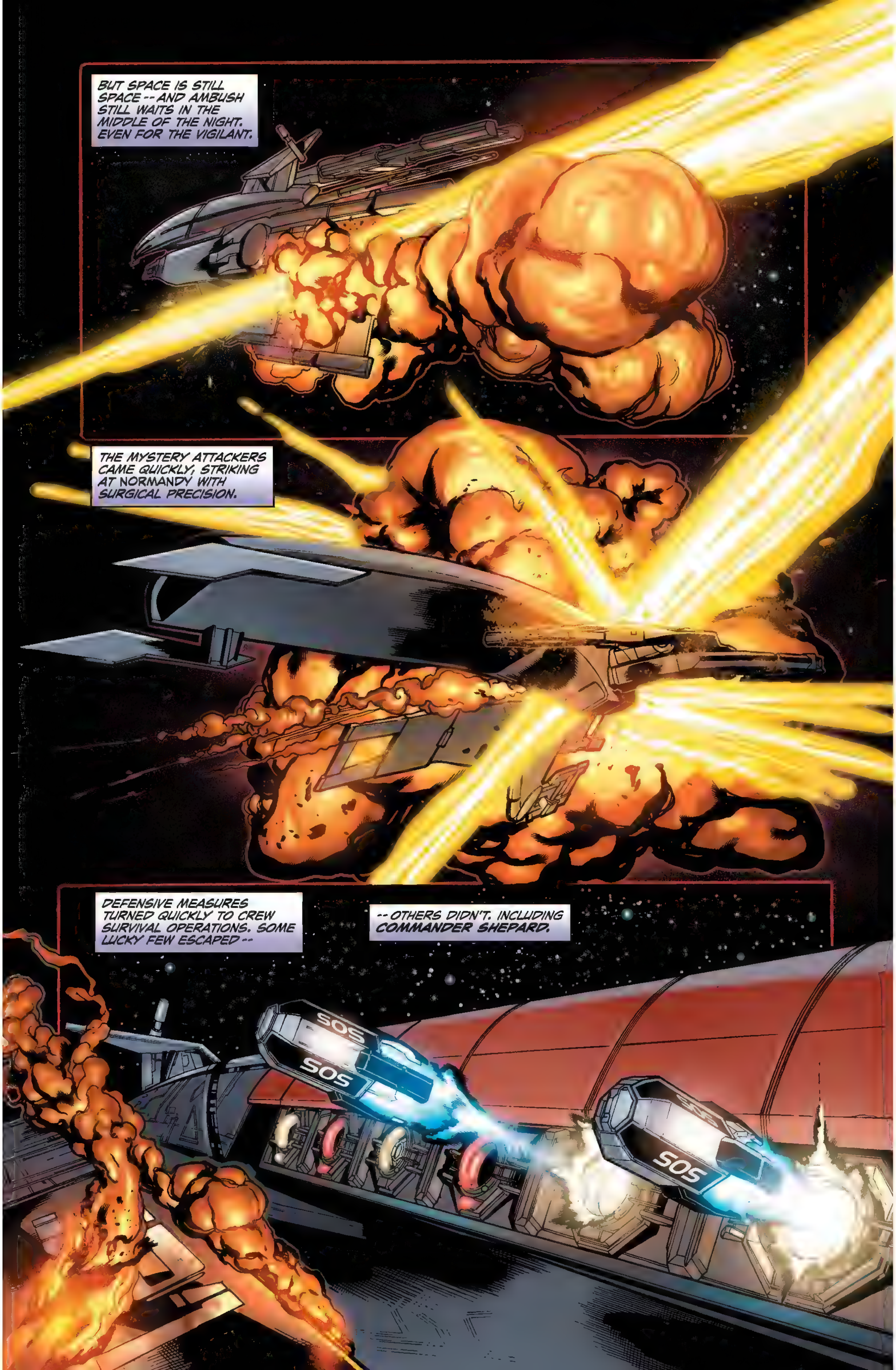

--AND THUS A NEED TO BE IN MANY PLACES AT ONCE. BUT I HOPE YOU AND I CAN BE FRIENDS, LIARA.
MAYBE. I THOUGHT I'D BE FRIENDS WITH ANYONE LOOKING FOR SHEPARD -- BUT NOW I'M NOT SO SURE. WHY IS *CERBERUS* LOOKING?
SHEPARD IS UNIQUE -- ONE OF THE GREATEST EXAMPLES OF OUR SPECIES. A SYMBOL FOR ALL HUMANITY.
DEAD OR ALIVE, WE WANT SHEPARD BACK IN HUMAN HANDS.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. IF SHEPARD IS DEAD, WHAT WOULD YOU WANT WITH A *CORPSE*--
AS AN ASARI, I CAN'T EXPECT YOU TO UNDERSTAND OUR TRADITIONS. BUT OUR REASONS ARE NOT IMPORTANT.
WHAT *IS* IMPORTANT IS THAT THE *SHADOW BROKER* WANTS SHEPARD, TOO -- AND SENT THOSE MERCENARIES TO STOP YOU.
IN SOME WAYS, THE SHADOW BROKER IS MY OPPOSITE NUMBER IN THE INFORMATION-GATHERING BUSINESS --
-- ALWAYS WORKING FROM AFAR. BUT NOW, THE BROKER HAS MADE A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL. OR, MORE PRECISELY, DEVILS --
--THE COLLECTORS.

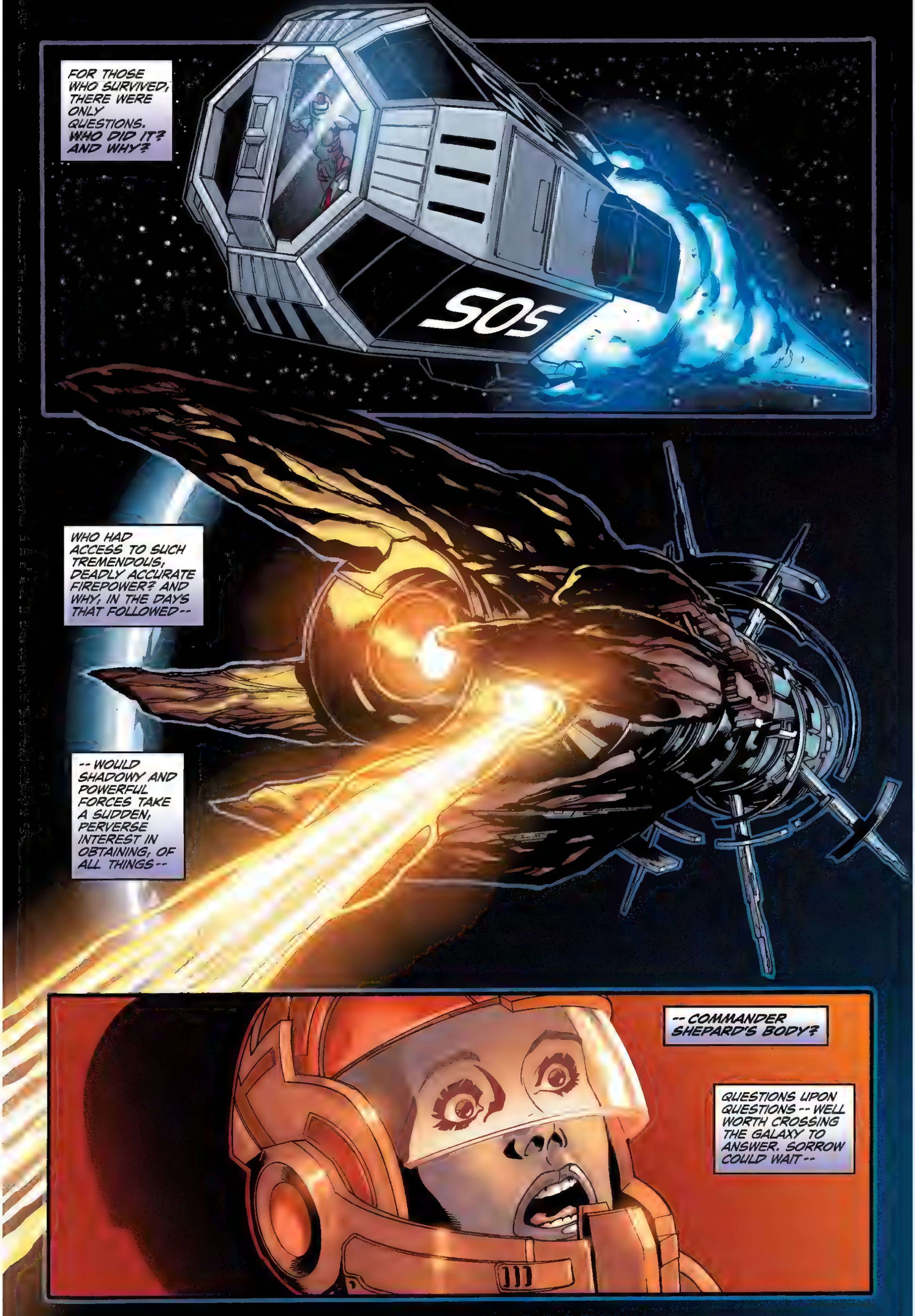

THE COLLECTORS! BUT THEY'RE A BUNCH OF SLAVERS. WHY WOULD THEY WANT A DEAD BODY?
THAT'S WHAT I NEED *YOU* TO FIND OUT.
FEW KNOW WHAT THE COLLECTORS WANT AT ALL. THEY'RE LITTLE MORE THAN COSMIC VAGABONDS--
--TURNING UP ON OMEGA FROM TIME TO TIME, MAKING OFF WITH BEINGS OF NO REAL USE--OFTEN WITH TRIVIAL DISTINCTIONS.
VOLUS MIDDLE SIBLINGS. DYSLEXIC KROGAN. ELCOR WHO SING WELL. PERVERSE, BUT HARMLESS IN THE LARGER SENSE--
--OR SO WE THOUGHT. BUT THEIR INTEREST IN SHEPARD IS ALARMING.
WE WOULD WANT SHEPARD'S REMAINS IN ANY EVENT--BUT IT'S VITAL THAT THE COLLECTORS *NOT* HAVE THEM.
WHATEVER THEIR REASONS ARE, THEY CAN'T BE ANY GOOD. WHICH IS WHY WE NEED *YOU.*

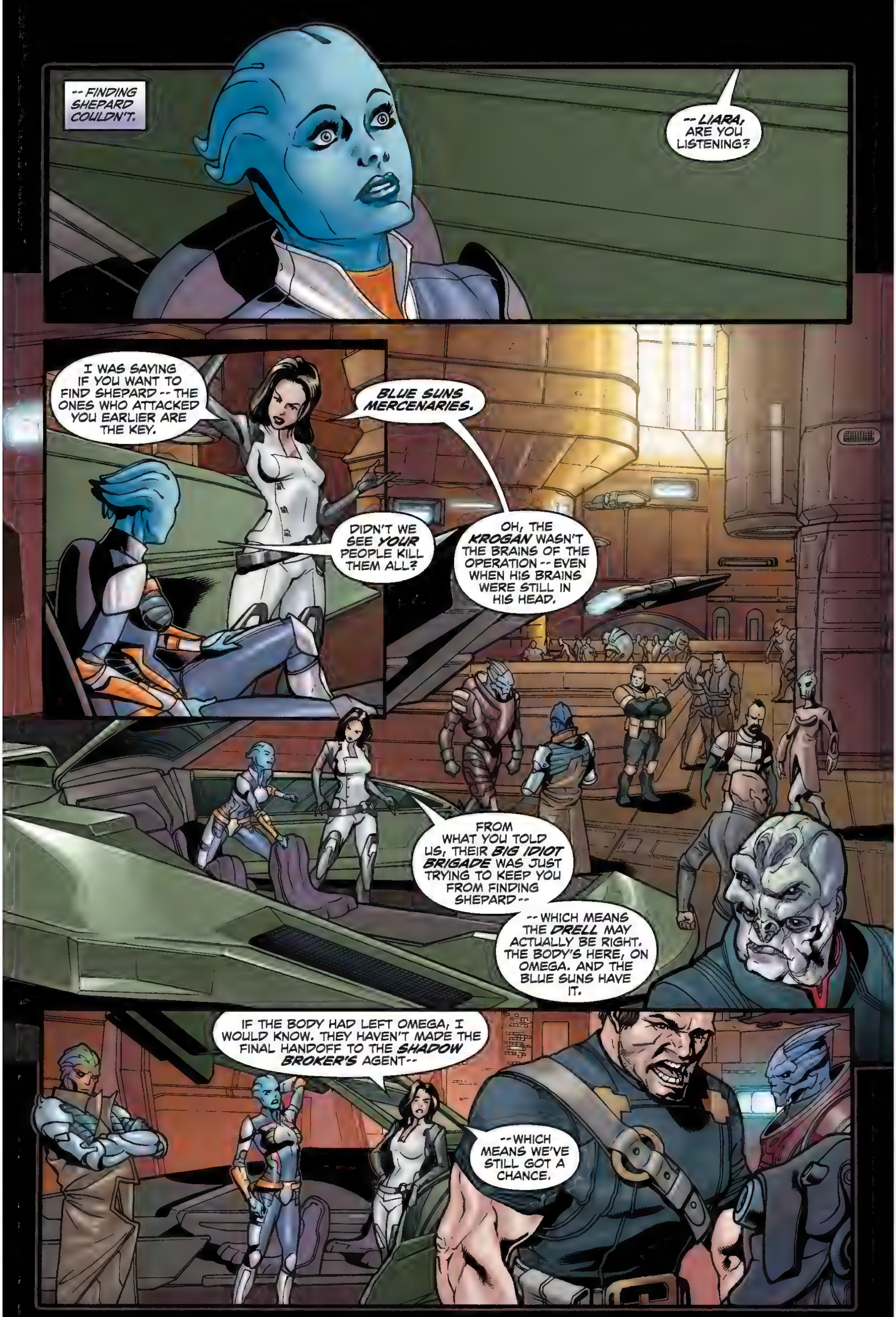

WHY ME? YOU HAVE ALL THESE RESOURCES -- AND YOU HAVE MIRANDA AND HER PEOPLE HERE.
IT'S DIFFICULT FOR ME TO CONTEND DIRECTLY WITH THE SHADOW BROKER OUT IN THE TERMINUS SYSTEMS.
AND WHILE MIRANDA HAS HER ROLE TO PLAY --
-- NOTHING BEATS HAVING SOMEONE WITH A PERSONAL MOTIVE DRIVING THEM.
YOU WERE VERY CLOSE WITH COMMANDER SHEPARD. WHEN I HEARD YOU WERE HERE, I KNEW I WANTED YOU ON MY TEAM.
THE DRELL, FERON, DOES SEEM TO HAVE A LEAD ON SHEPARD. I SUSPECT HE, ALSO, MAY PROVE USEFUL... FOR AN ALIEN.
WILL YOU WORK WITH HIM? CAN WE COUNT ON YOU?
NO --
-- BUT SHEPARD CAN.
GOOD --

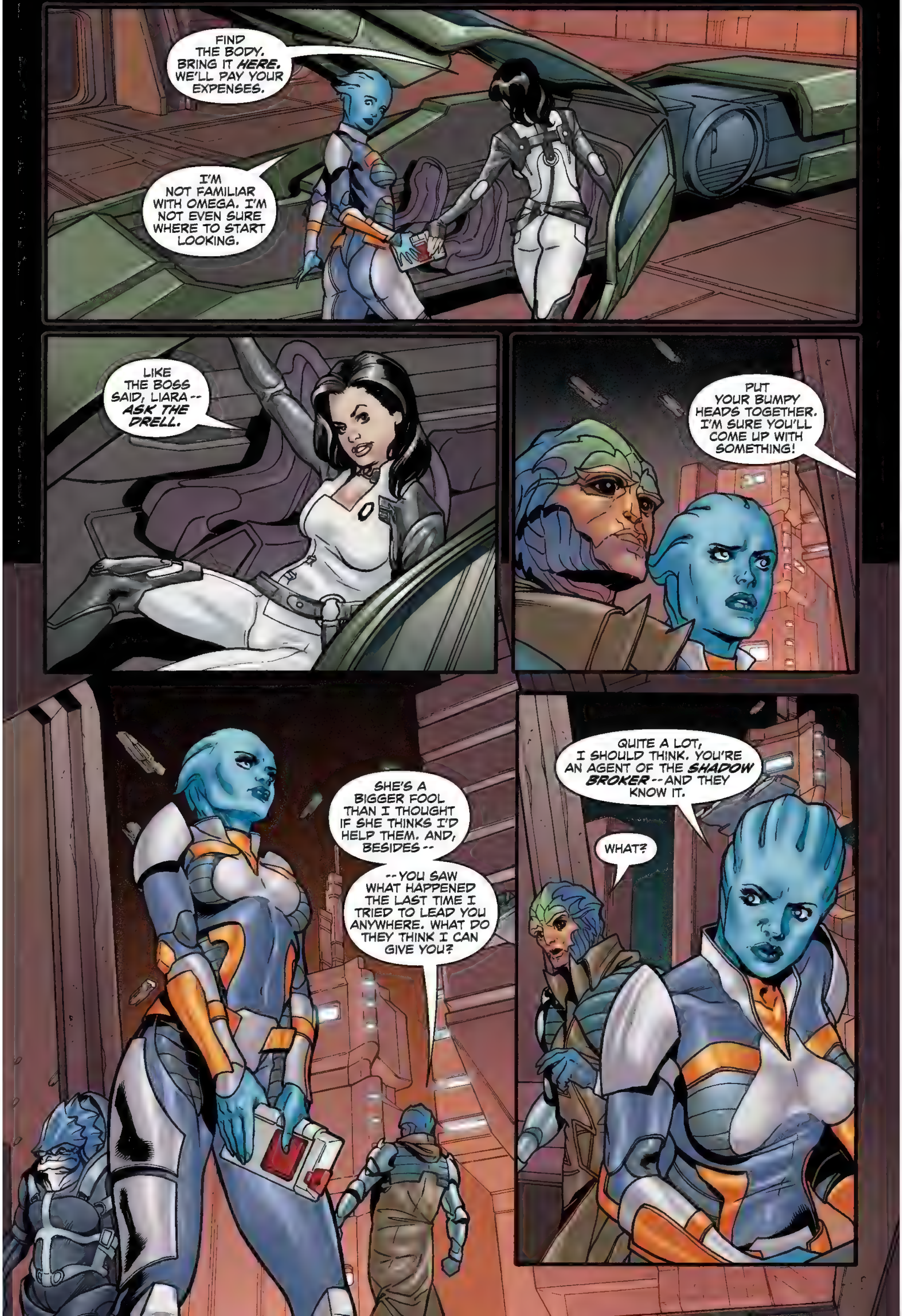

"-- THAT'S WHAT I WAS COUNTING ON..."
THE DELAY IS UNACCEPTABLE, *SHADOW BROKER!*
AND YET YOU WILL ACCEPT IT -- UNLESS YOU *COLLECTORS* KNOW OF ANOTHER SOURCE THAT HAS SHEPARD'S BODY.
SHEPARD WILL BE BROUGHT TO A LOCATION OF MY OWN CHOOSING. THE TRANSACTION WILL TAKE PLACE THERE AND NOWHERE ELSE.
OTHER PLAYERS HAVE ENTERED THE GAME. I MUST PROTECT MY SOURCES AND METHODS.
QUICKLY, THEN. *SUCCEED.*
I ALWAYS DO--
--I ALWAYS DO.

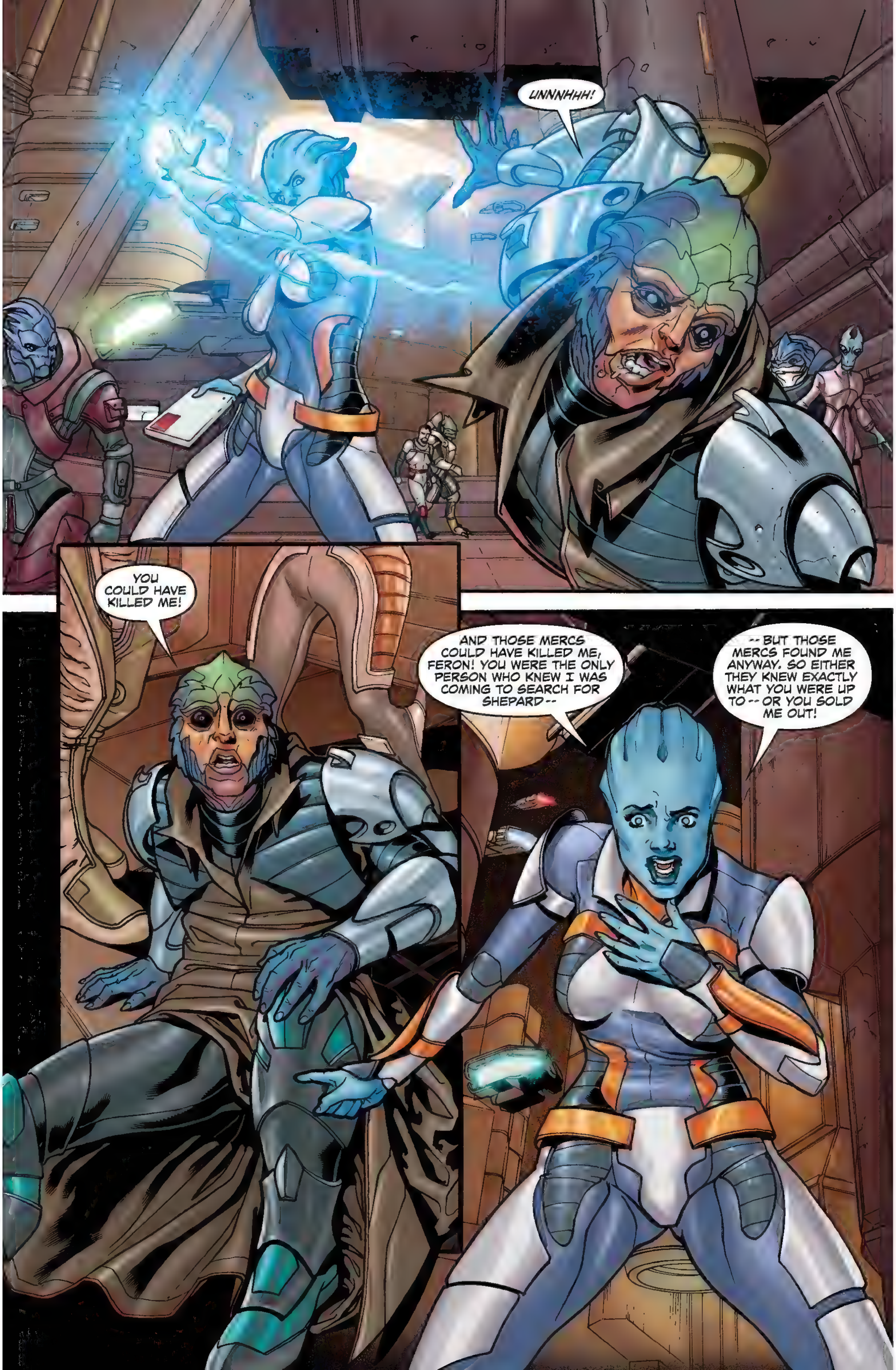

IN SPACE, EVERY MOMENT IS THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT--
--AND EVERY ATTACK IS AN AMBUSH.
LIFE ON A PLANET WITH SEAS PREPARED HUMANITY FOR THE IDEA THAT SHIPS COULD BE LOST TO MYSTERY ATTACKERS.
SPACE TRAVEL MEANT OCEANS WITHOUT HORIZONS --WITH POTENTIAL DANGERS IN EVERY DIRECTION. HUMANITY UNDERSTOOD-- AND PREPARED.
AMONG ALL SHIPS, NORMANDY SHOULD HAVE BEEN SAFE. THE MOST ADVANCED SHIP OF THE **ALLIANCE**--
--AND THE VESSEL OF **COMMANDER SHEPARD,** HERO OF THE CITADEL. NORMANDY CARRIED THE HOPES OF HUMANITY-- AND MORE-- THROUGH THE DARKNESS.

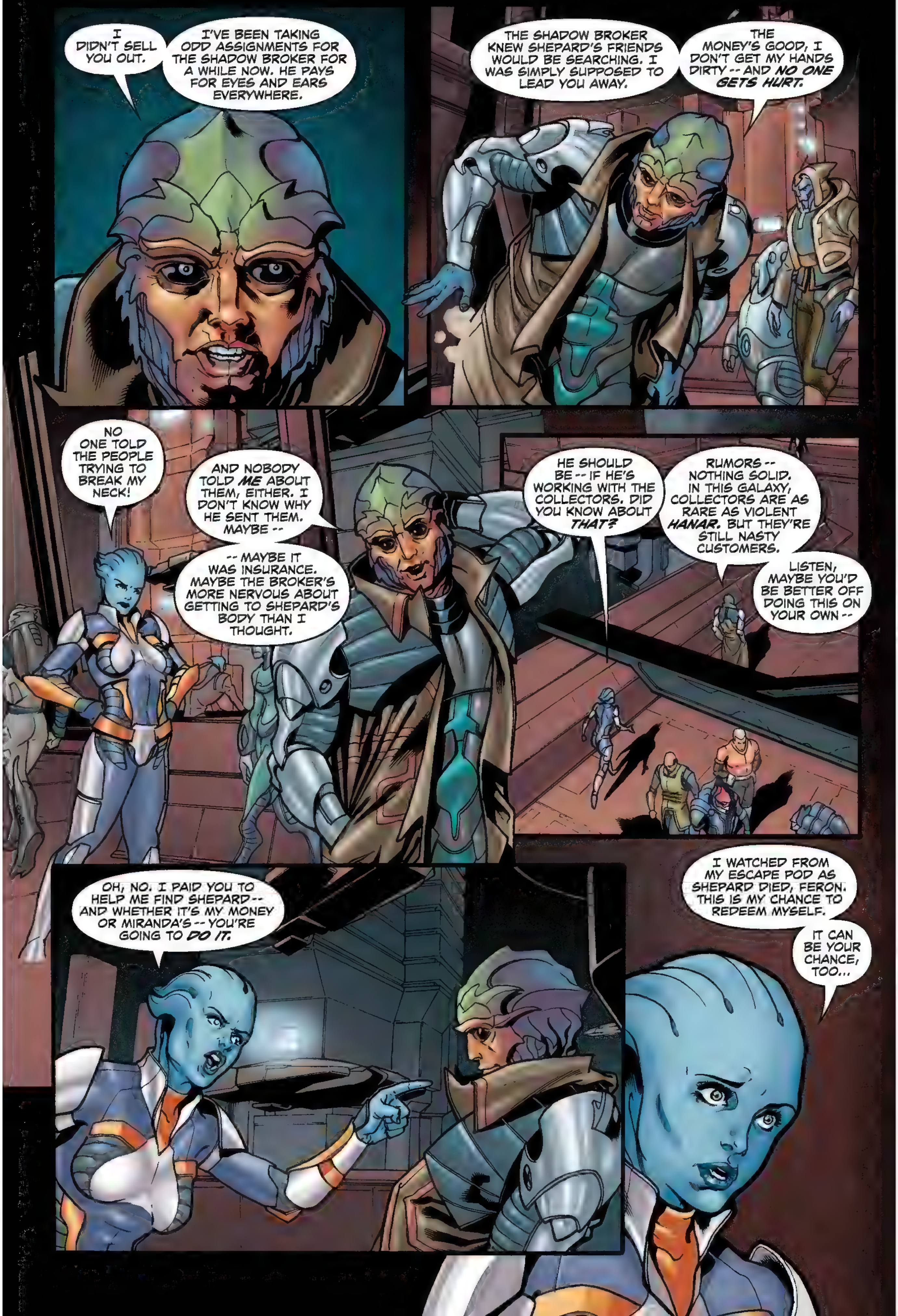

BUT SPACE IS STILL SPACE -- AND AMBUSH STILL WAITS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT. EVEN FOR THE VIGILANT.
THE MYSTERY ATTACKERS CAME QUICKLY, STRIKING AT NORMANDY WITH SURGICAL PRECISION.
DEFENSIVE MEASURES TURNED QUICKLY TO CREW SURVIVAL OPERATIONS. SOME LUCKY FEW ESCAPED --
-- OTHERS DIDN'T. INCLUDING COMMANDER SHEPARD.
SOS
SOS
SOS
SOS

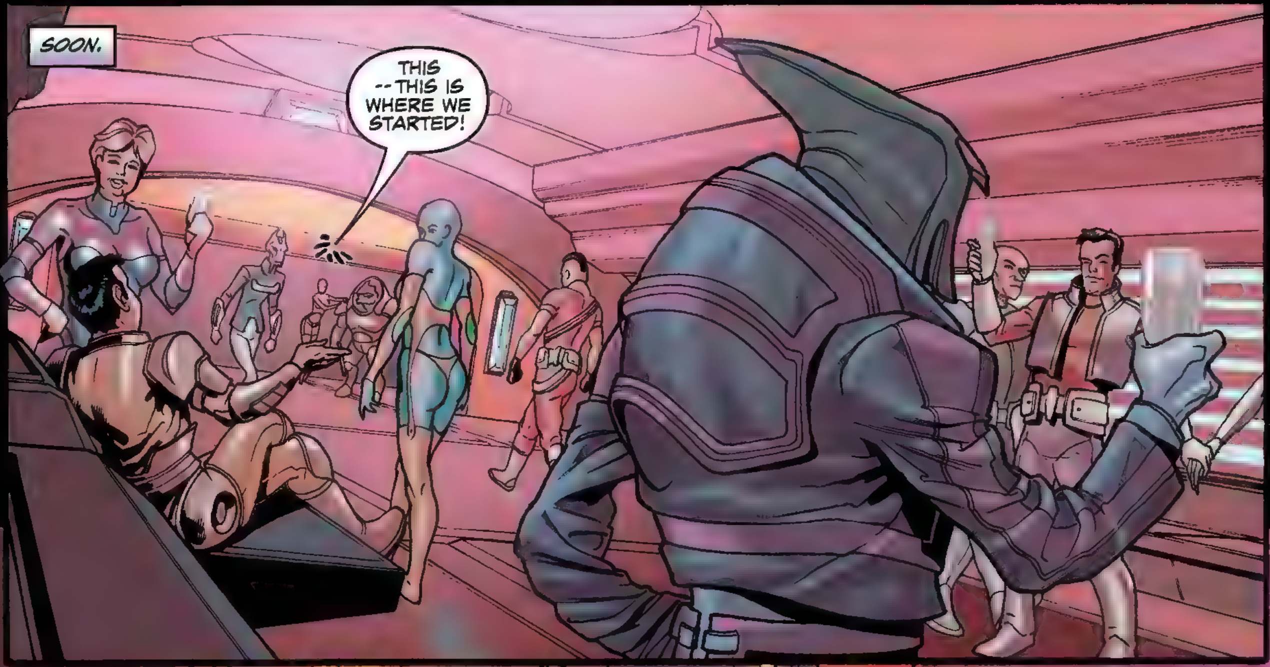

FOR THOSE WHO SURVIVED, THERE WERE ONLY QUESTIONS. WHO DID IT? AND WHY?
SOS
WHO HAD ACCESS TO SUCH TREMENDOUS, DEADLY ACCURATE FIREPOWER? AND WHY, IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED--
-- WOULD SHADOWY AND POWERFUL FORCES TAKE A SUDDEN, PERVERSE INTEREST IN OBTAINING, OF ALL THINGS--
-- COMMANDER SHEPARD'S BODY?
QUESTIONS UPON QUESTIONS -- WELL WORTH CROSSING THE GALAXY TO ANSWER. SORROW COULD WAIT--

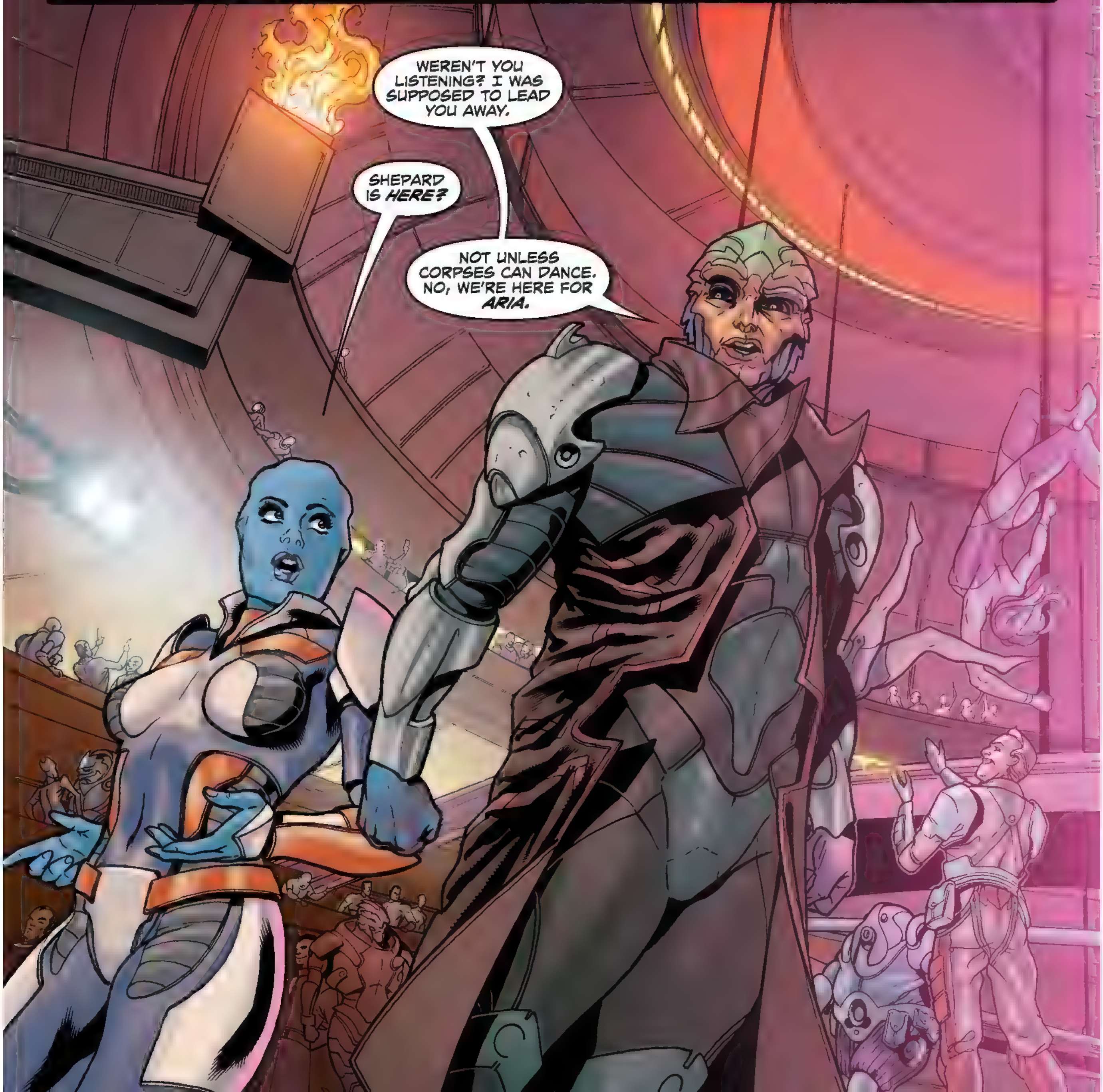

--FINDING SHEPARD COULDN'T.
--LIARA, ARE YOU LISTENING?
I WAS SAYING IF YOU WANT TO FIND SHEPARD--THE ONES WHO ATTACKED YOU EARLIER ARE THE KEY.
BLUE SUNS MERCENARIES.
DIDN'T WE SEE YOUR PEOPLE KILL THEM ALL?
OH, THE KROGAN WASN'T THE BRAINS OF THE OPERATION--EVEN WHEN HIS BRAINS WERE STILL IN HIS HEAD.
FROM WHAT YOU TOLD US, THEIR BIG IDIOT BRIGADE WAS JUST TRYING TO KEEP YOU FROM FINDING SHEPARD--
--WHICH MEANS THE DRELL MAY ACTUALLY BE RIGHT. THE BODY'S HERE, ON OMEGA. AND THE BLUE SUNS HAVE IT.
IF THE BODY HAD LEFT OMEGA, I WOULD KNOW. THEY HAVEN'T MADE THE FINAL HANDOFF TO THE SHADOW BROKER'S AGENT--
--WHICH MEANS WE'VE STILL GOT A CHANCE.

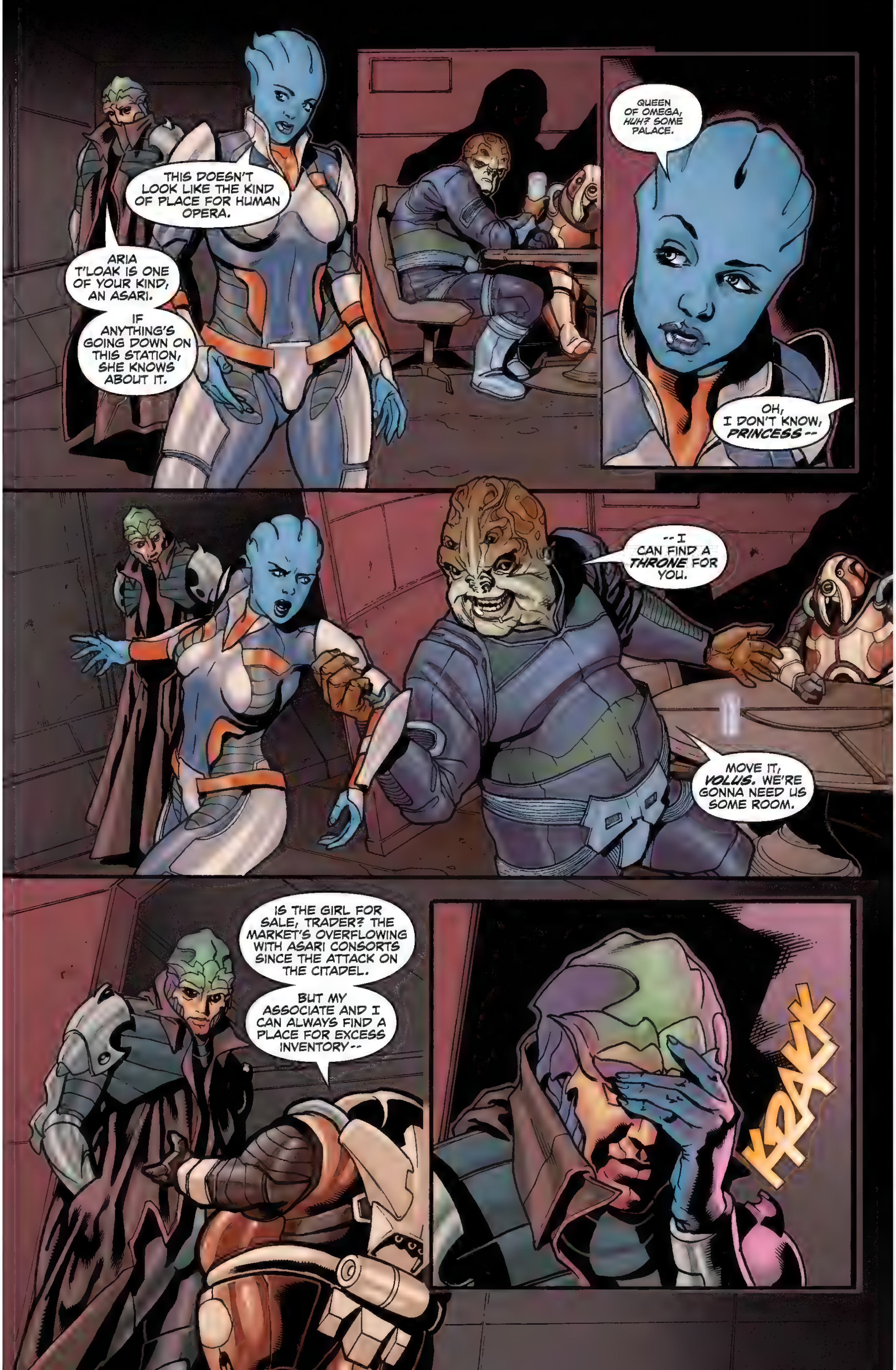

FIND THE BODY. BRING IT *HERE.* WE'LL PAY YOUR EXPENSES.
I'M NOT FAMILIAR WITH OMEGA. I'M NOT EVEN SURE WHERE TO START LOOKING.
LIKE THE BOSS SAID, LIARA-- *ASK THE DRELL.*
PUT YOUR BUMPY HEADS TOGETHER. I'M SURE YOU'LL COME UP WITH SOMETHING!
SHE'S A BIGGER FOOL THAN I THOUGHT IF SHE THINKS I'D HELP THEM. AND, BESIDES--
--YOU SAW WHAT HAPPENED THE LAST TIME I TRIED TO LEAD YOU ANYWHERE. WHAT DO THEY THINK I CAN GIVE YOU?
QUITE A LOT, I SHOULD THINK. YOU'RE AN AGENT OF THE *SHADOW BROKER*--AND THEY KNOW IT.
WHAT?

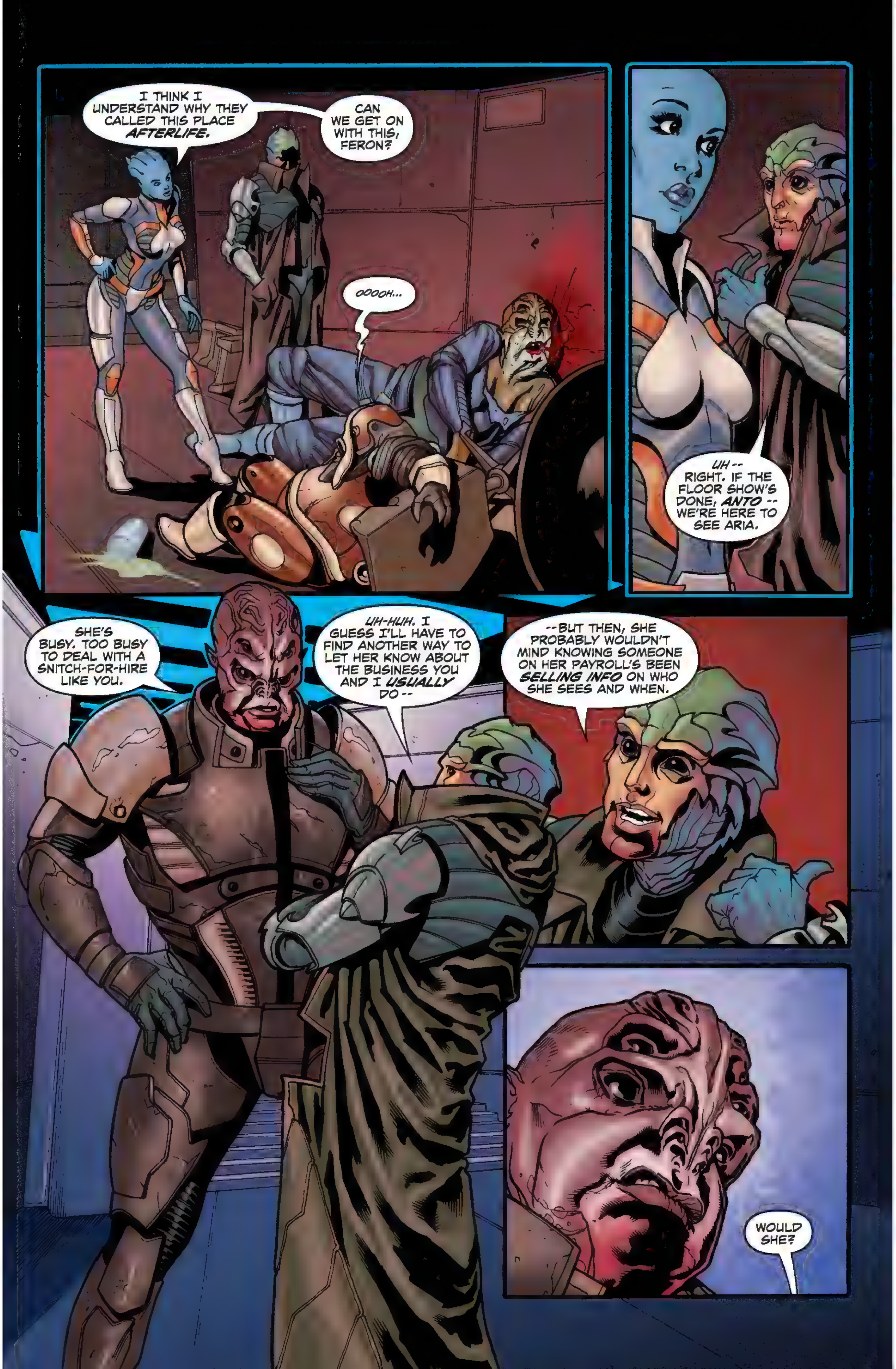

UNNNHHH!
YOU COULD HAVE KILLED ME!
AND THOSE MERCS COULD HAVE KILLED ME, FERON! YOU WERE THE ONLY PERSON WHO KNEW I WAS COMING TO SEARCH FOR SHEPARD--
--BUT THOSE MERCS FOUND ME ANYWAY. SO EITHER THEY KNEW EXACTLY WHAT YOU WERE UP TO--OR YOU SOLD ME OUT!

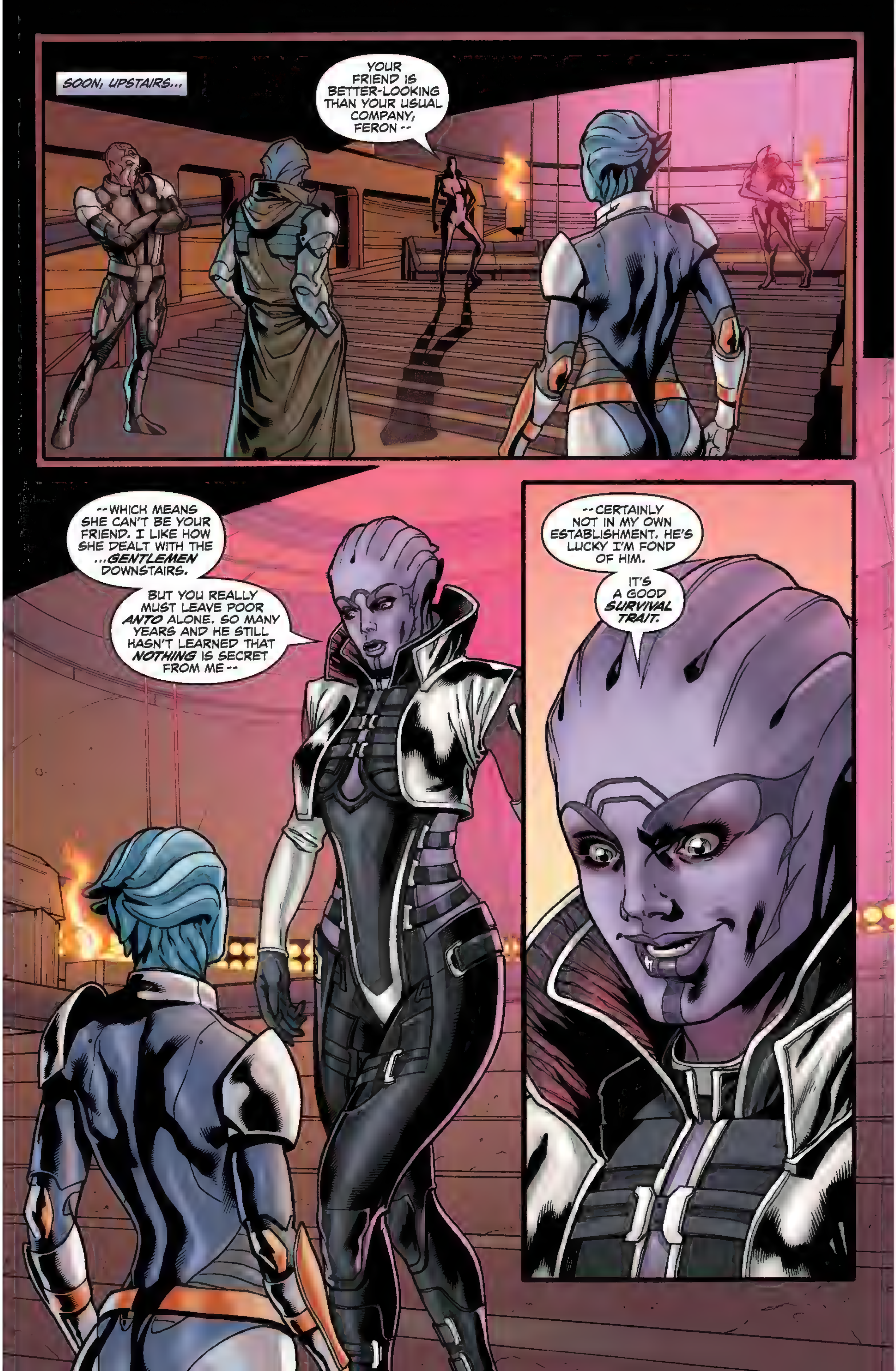

I DIDN'T SELL YOU OUT.
I'VE BEEN TAKING ODD ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE SHADOW BROKER FOR A WHILE NOW. HE PAYS FOR EYES AND EARS EVERYWHERE.
THE SHADOW BROKER KNEW SHEPARD'S FRIENDS WOULD BE SEARCHING. I WAS SIMPLY SUPPOSED TO LEAD YOU AWAY.
THE MONEY'S GOOD, I DON'T GET MY HANDS DIRTY -- AND ***NO ONE GETS HURT.***
NO ONE TOLD THE PEOPLE TRYING TO BREAK MY NECK!
AND NOBODY TOLD ***ME*** ABOUT THEM, EITHER. I DON'T KNOW WHY HE SENT THEM. MAYBE --
-- MAYBE IT WAS INSURANCE. MAYBE THE BROKER'S MORE NERVOUS ABOUT GETTING TO SHEPARD'S BODY THAN I THOUGHT.
HE SHOULD BE -- IF HE'S WORKING WITH THE COLLECTORS. DID YOU KNOW ABOUT ***THAT?***
RUMORS -- NOTHING SOLID. IN THIS GALAXY, COLLECTORS ARE AS RARE AS VIOLENT ***HANAR.*** BUT THEY'RE STILL NASTY CUSTOMERS.
LISTEN, MAYBE YOU'D BE BETTER OFF DOING THIS ON YOUR OWN --
OH, NO. I PAID YOU TO HELP ME FIND SHEPARD -- AND WHETHER IT'S MY MONEY OR MIRANDA'S -- YOU'RE GOING TO ***DO IT.***
I WATCHED FROM MY ESCAPE POD AS SHEPARD DIED, FERON. THIS IS MY CHANCE TO REDEEM MYSELF.
IT CAN BE YOUR CHANCE, TOO...

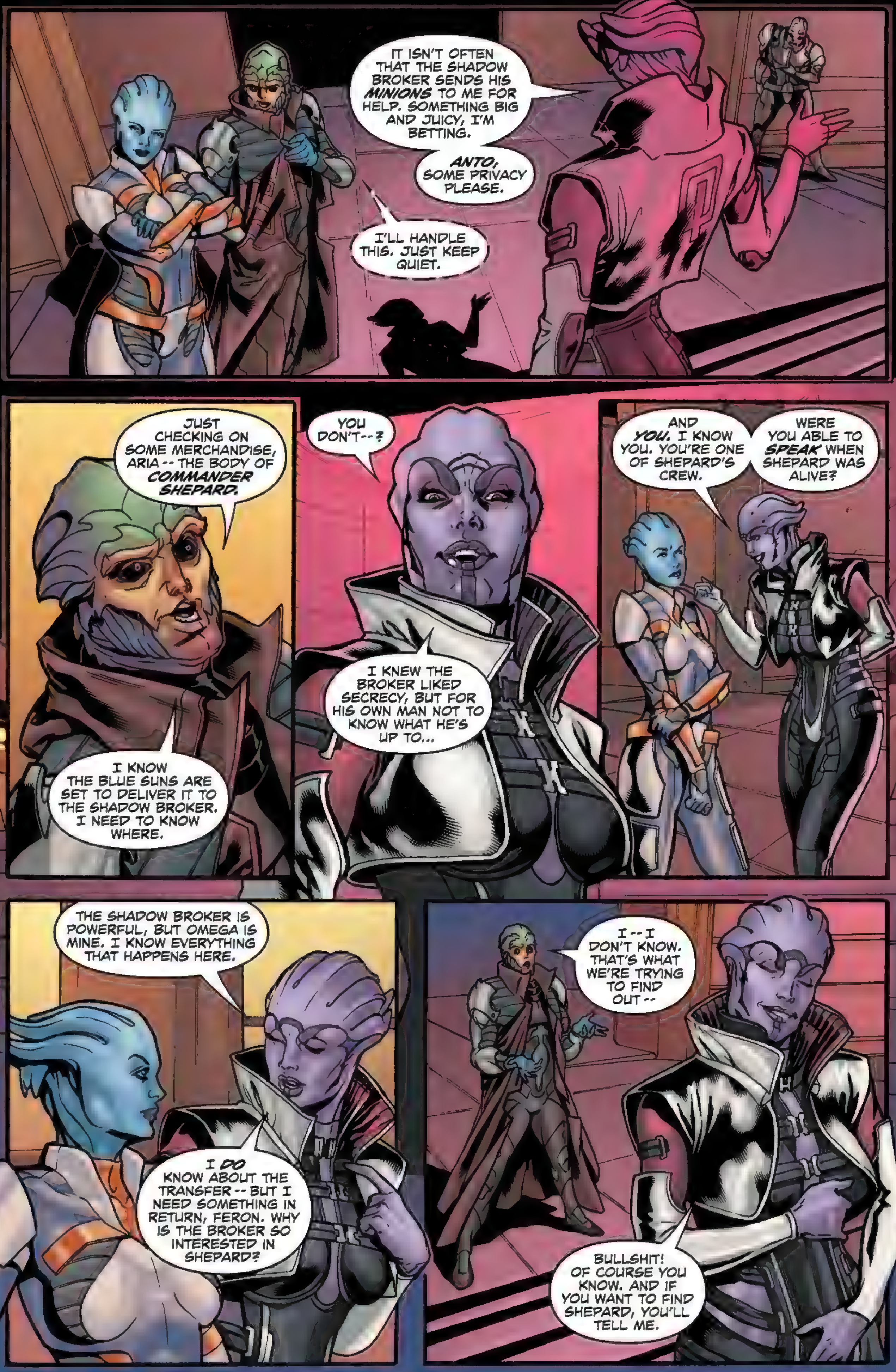

SOON.
THIS --THIS IS WHERE WE STARTED!

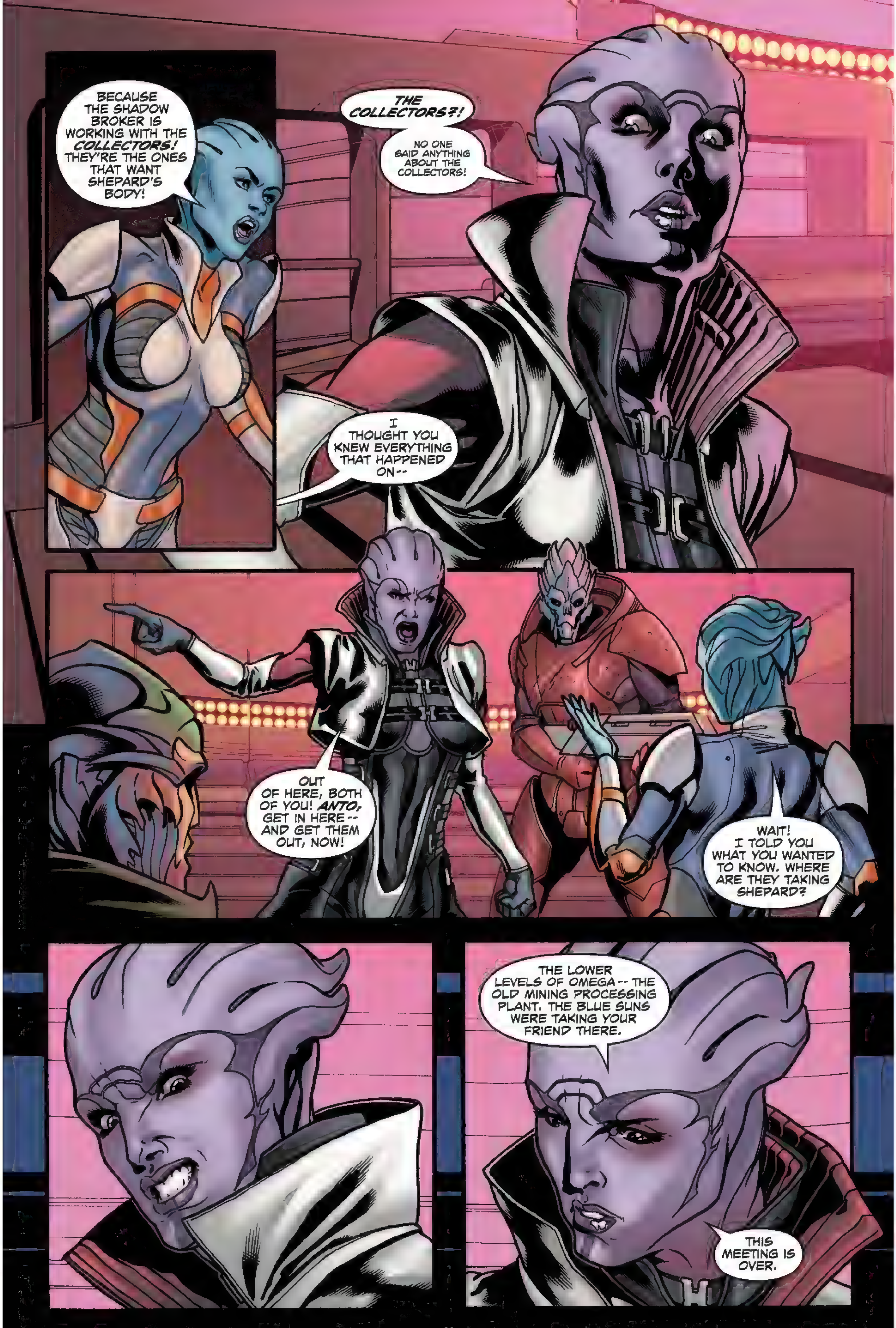

WEREN'T YOU LISTENING? I WAS SUPPOSED TO LEAD YOU AWAY.
SHEPARD IS *HERE?*
NOT UNLESS CORPSES CAN DANCE. NO, WE'RE HERE FOR *ARIA.*

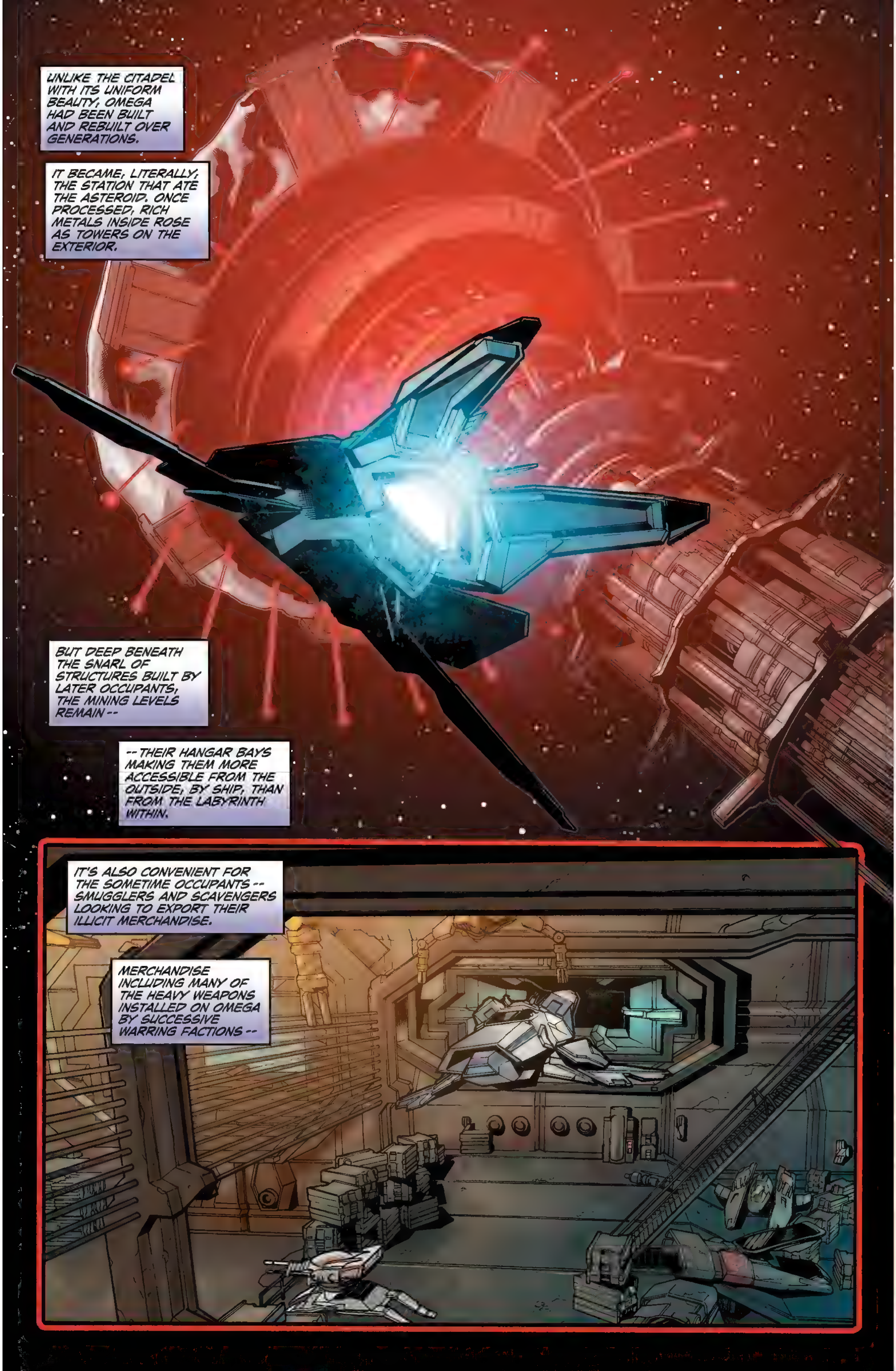

THIS DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THE KIND OF PLACE FOR HUMAN OPERA.
ARIA T'LOAK IS ONE OF YOUR KIND, AN ASARI.
IF ANYTHING'S GOING DOWN ON THIS STATION, SHE KNOWS ABOUT IT.
QUEEN OF OMEGA, *HUH?* SOME PALACE.
OH, I DON'T KNOW, ***PRINCESS***--
--I CAN FIND A ***THRONE*** FOR YOU.
MOVE IT, ***VOLUS.*** WE'RE GONNA NEED US SOME ROOM.
IS THE GIRL FOR SALE, TRADER? THE MARKET'S OVERFLOWING WITH ASARI CONSORTS SINCE THE ATTACK ON THE CITADEL.
BUT MY ASSOCIATE AND I CAN ALWAYS FIND A PLACE FOR EXCESS INVENTORY--
KRAAK

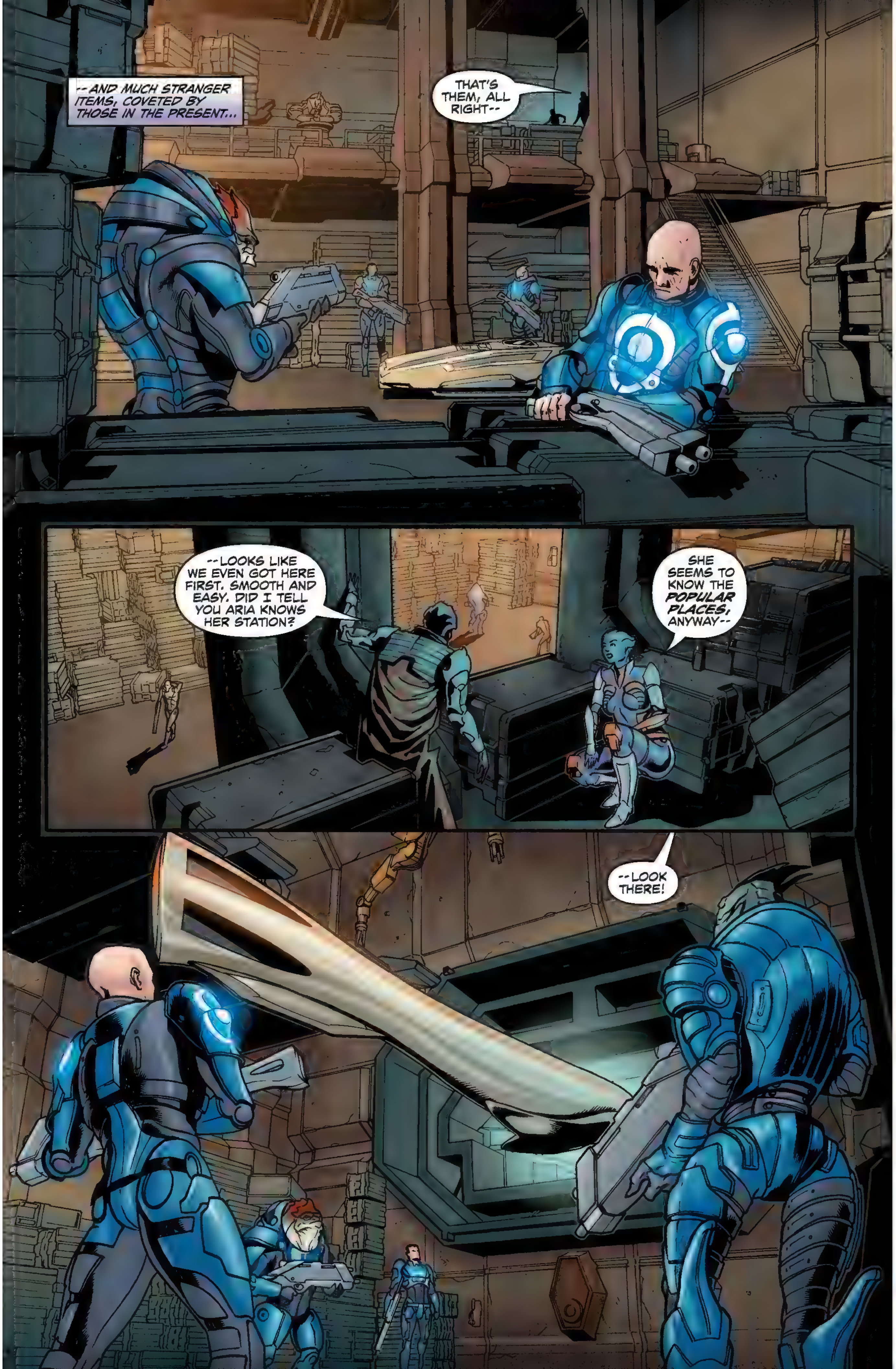

I THINK I UNDERSTAND WHY THEY CALLED THIS PLACE *AFTERLIFE.*
CAN WE GET ON WITH THIS, FERON?
OOOOH...
UH -- RIGHT. IF THE FLOOR SHOW'S DONE, *ANTO* -- WE'RE HERE TO SEE ARIA.
SHE'S BUSY. TOO BUSY TO DEAL WITH A SNITCH-FOR-HIRE LIKE YOU.
UH-HUH. I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO FIND ANOTHER WAY TO LET HER KNOW ABOUT THE BUSINESS YOU AND I *USUALLY* DO --
-- BUT THEN, SHE PROBABLY WOULDN'T MIND KNOWING SOMEONE ON HER PAYROLL'S BEEN *SELLING INFO* ON WHO SHE SEES AND WHEN.
WOULD SHE?

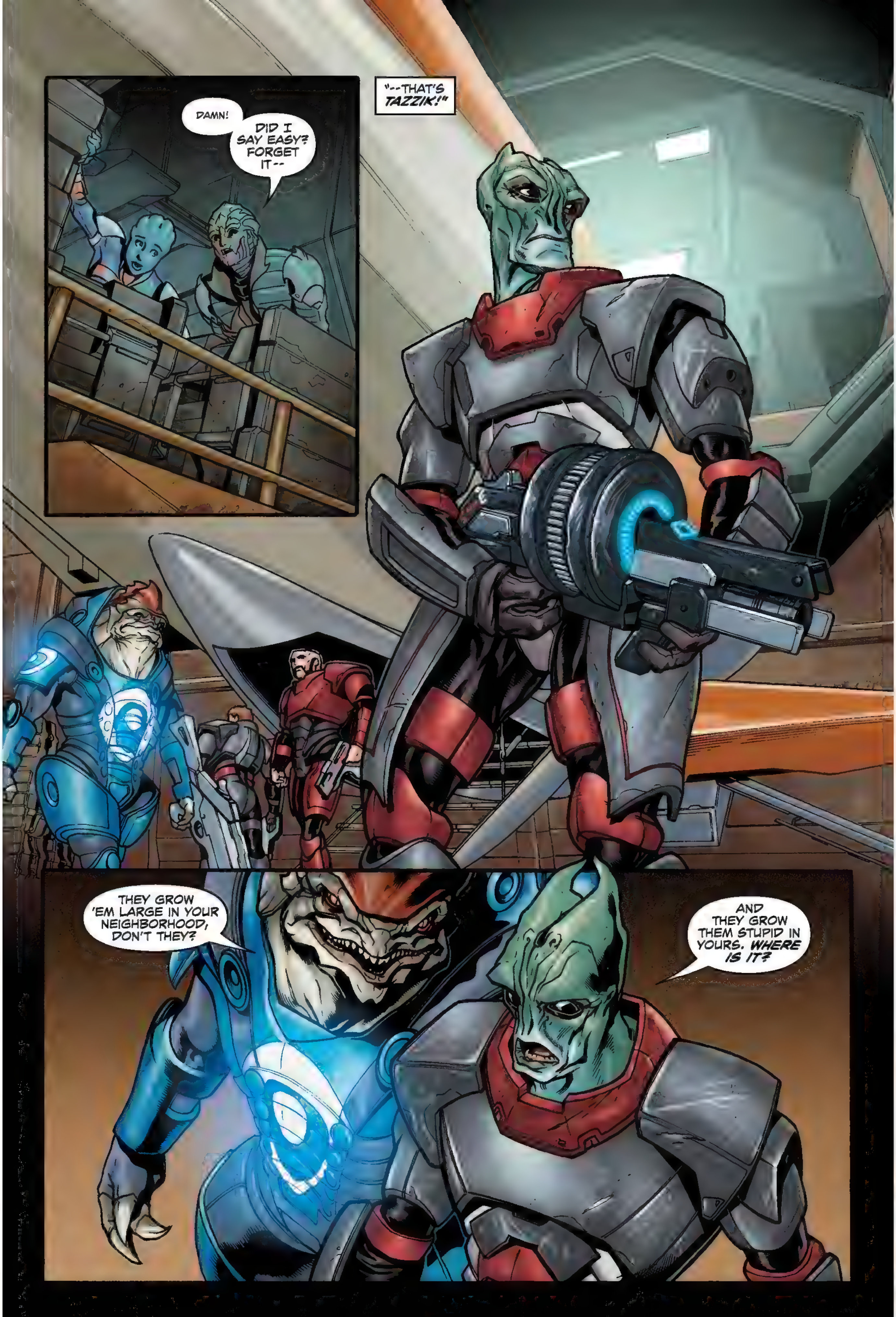

SOON, UPSTAIRS...
YOUR FRIEND IS BETTER-LOOKING THAN YOUR USUAL COMPANY, FERON --
--WHICH MEANS SHE CAN'T BE YOUR FRIEND. I LIKE HOW SHE DEALT WITH THE ...*GENTLEMEN* DOWNSTAIRS.
BUT YOU REALLY MUST LEAVE POOR *ANTO* ALONE. SO MANY YEARS AND HE STILL HASN'T LEARNED THAT *NOTHING* IS SECRET FROM ME --
--CERTAINLY NOT IN MY OWN ESTABLISHMENT. HE'S LUCKY I'M FOND OF HIM.
IT'S A GOOD *SURVIVAL TRAIT.*

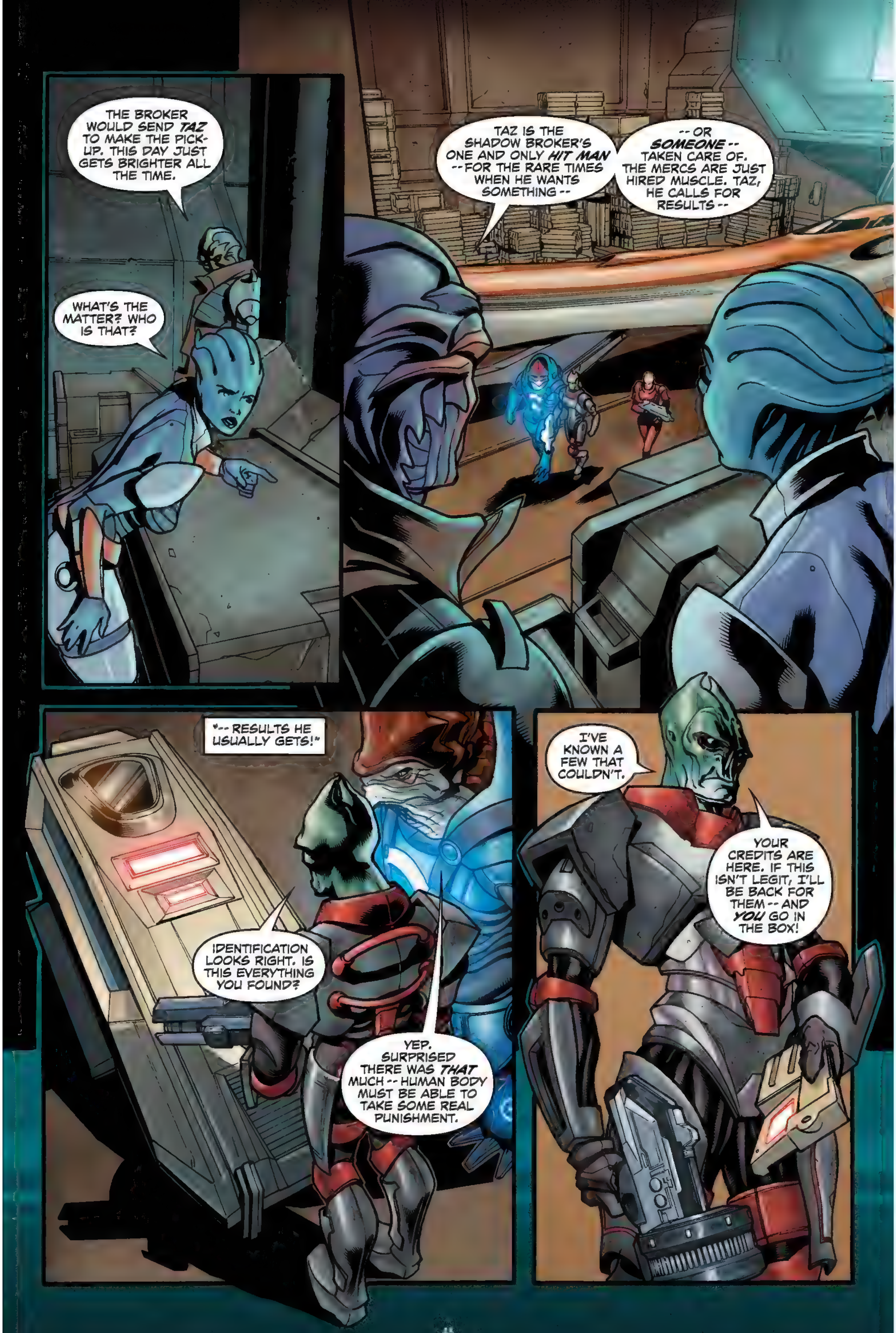

IT ISN'T OFTEN THAT THE SHADOW BROKER SENDS HIS *MINIONS* TO ME FOR HELP. SOMETHING BIG AND JUICY, I'M BETTING.
ANTO, SOME PRIVACY PLEASE.
I'LL HANDLE THIS. JUST KEEP QUIET.
JUST CHECKING ON SOME MERCHANDISE, ARIA -- THE BODY OF *COMMANDER SHEPARD.*
I KNOW THE BLUE SUNS ARE SET TO DELIVER IT TO THE SHADOW BROKER. I NEED TO KNOW WHERE.
YOU DON'T--?
I KNEW THE BROKER LIKED SECRECY, BUT FOR HIS OWN MAN NOT TO KNOW WHAT HE'S UP TO...
AND *YOU.* I KNOW YOU. YOU'RE ONE OF SHEPARD'S CREW.
WERE YOU ABLE TO *SPEAK* WHEN SHEPARD WAS ALIVE?
THE SHADOW BROKER IS POWERFUL, BUT OMEGA IS MINE. I KNOW EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS HERE.
I *DO* KNOW ABOUT THE TRANSFER -- BUT I NEED SOMETHING IN RETURN, FERON. WHY IS THE BROKER SO INTERESTED IN SHEPARD?
I -- I DON'T KNOW. THAT'S WHAT WE'RE TRYING TO FIND OUT --
BULLSHIT! OF COURSE YOU KNOW. AND IF YOU WANT TO FIND SHEPARD, YOU'LL TELL ME.

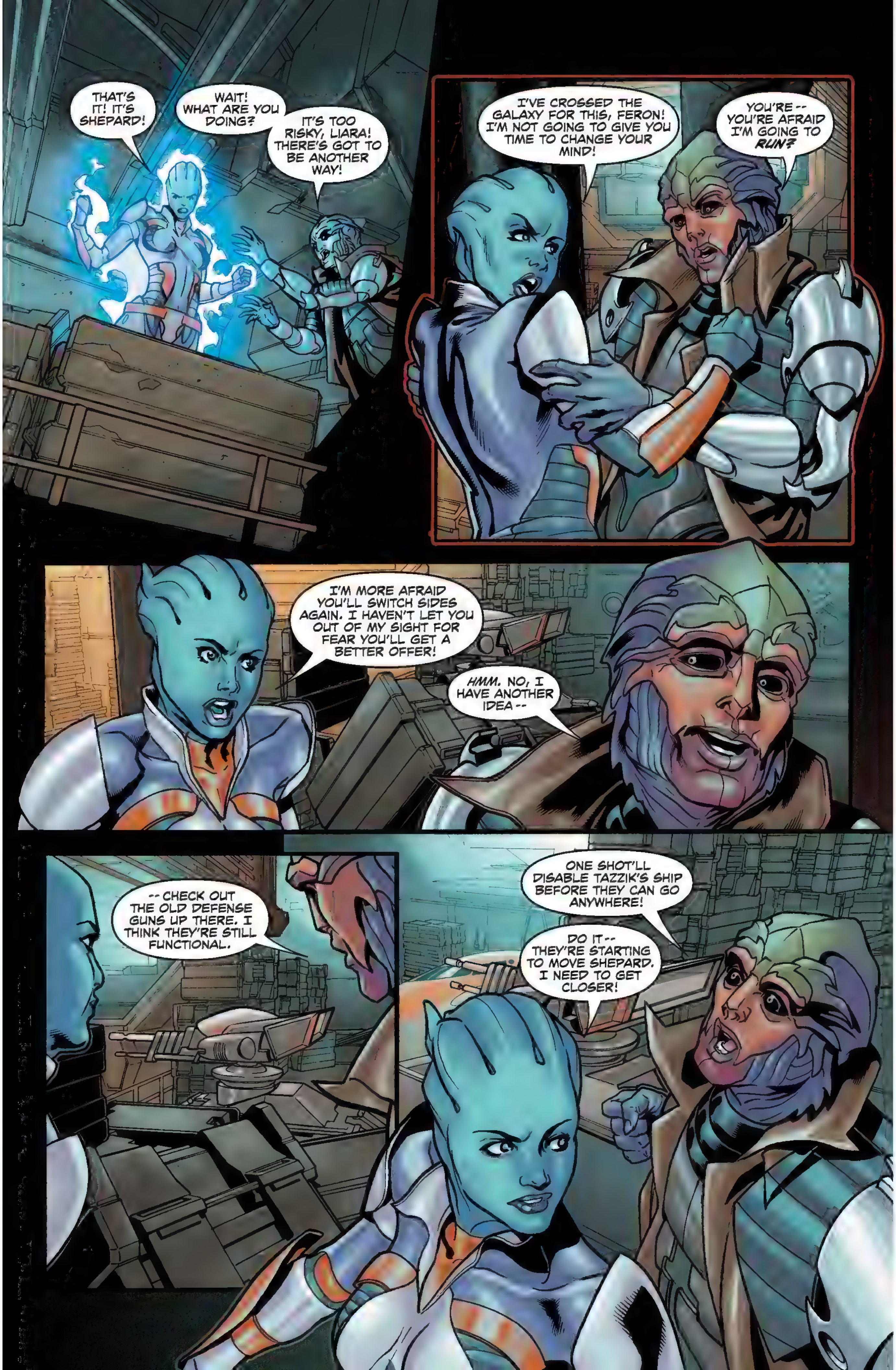

BECAUSE THE SHADOW BROKER IS WORKING WITH THE ***COLLECTORS!*** THEY'RE THE ONES THAT WANT SHEPARD'S BODY!
THE COLLECTORS?!
NO ONE SAID ANYTHING ABOUT THE COLLECTORS!
I THOUGHT YOU KNEW EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED ON--
OUT OF HERE, BOTH OF YOU! ***ANTO,*** GET IN HERE -- AND GET THEM OUT, NOW!
WAIT! I TOLD YOU WHAT YOU WANTED TO KNOW. WHERE ARE THEY TAKING SHEPARD?
THE LOWER LEVELS OF OMEGA -- THE OLD MINING PROCESSING PLANT. THE BLUE SUNS WERE TAKING YOUR FRIEND THERE.
THIS MEETING IS OVER.

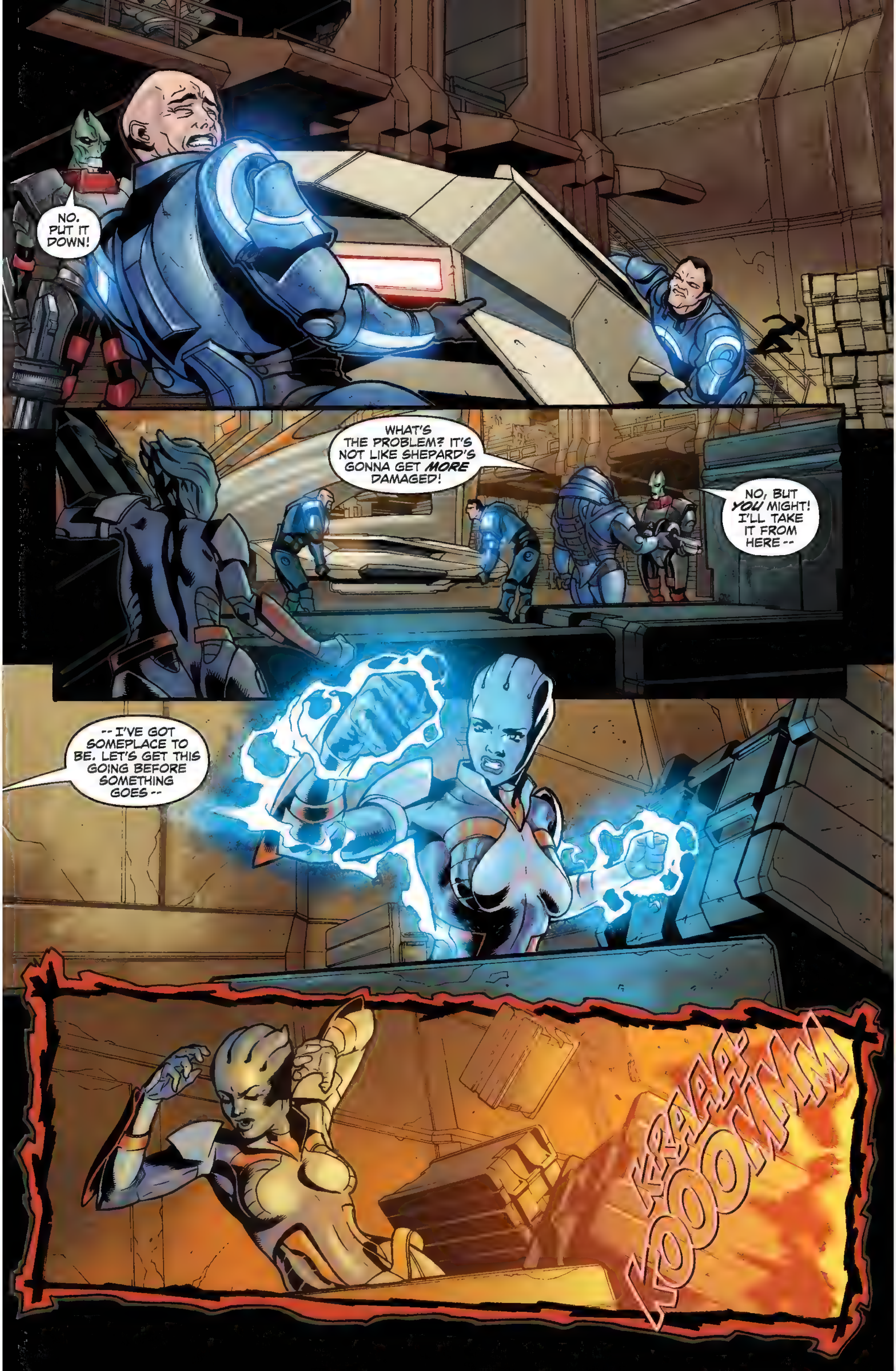

UNLIKE THE CITADEL WITH ITS UNIFORM BEAUTY, OMEGA HAD BEEN BUILT AND REBUILT OVER GENERATIONS.
IT BECAME, LITERALLY, THE STATION THAT ATE THE ASTEROID. ONCE PROCESSED, RICH METALS INSIDE ROSE AS TOWERS ON THE EXTERIOR.
BUT DEEP BENEATH THE SNARL OF STRUCTURES BUILT BY LATER OCCUPANTS, THE MINING LEVELS REMAIN --
-- THEIR HANGAR BAYS MAKING THEM MORE ACCESSIBLE FROM THE OUTSIDE, BY SHIP, THAN FROM THE LABYRINTH WITHIN.
IT'S ALSO CONVENIENT FOR THE SOMETIME OCCUPANTS -- SMUGGLERS AND SCAVENGERS LOOKING TO EXPORT THEIR ILLICIT MERCHANDISE.
MERCHANDISE INCLUDING MANY OF THE HEAVY WEAPONS INSTALLED ON OMEGA BY SUCCESSIVE WARRING FACTIONS --

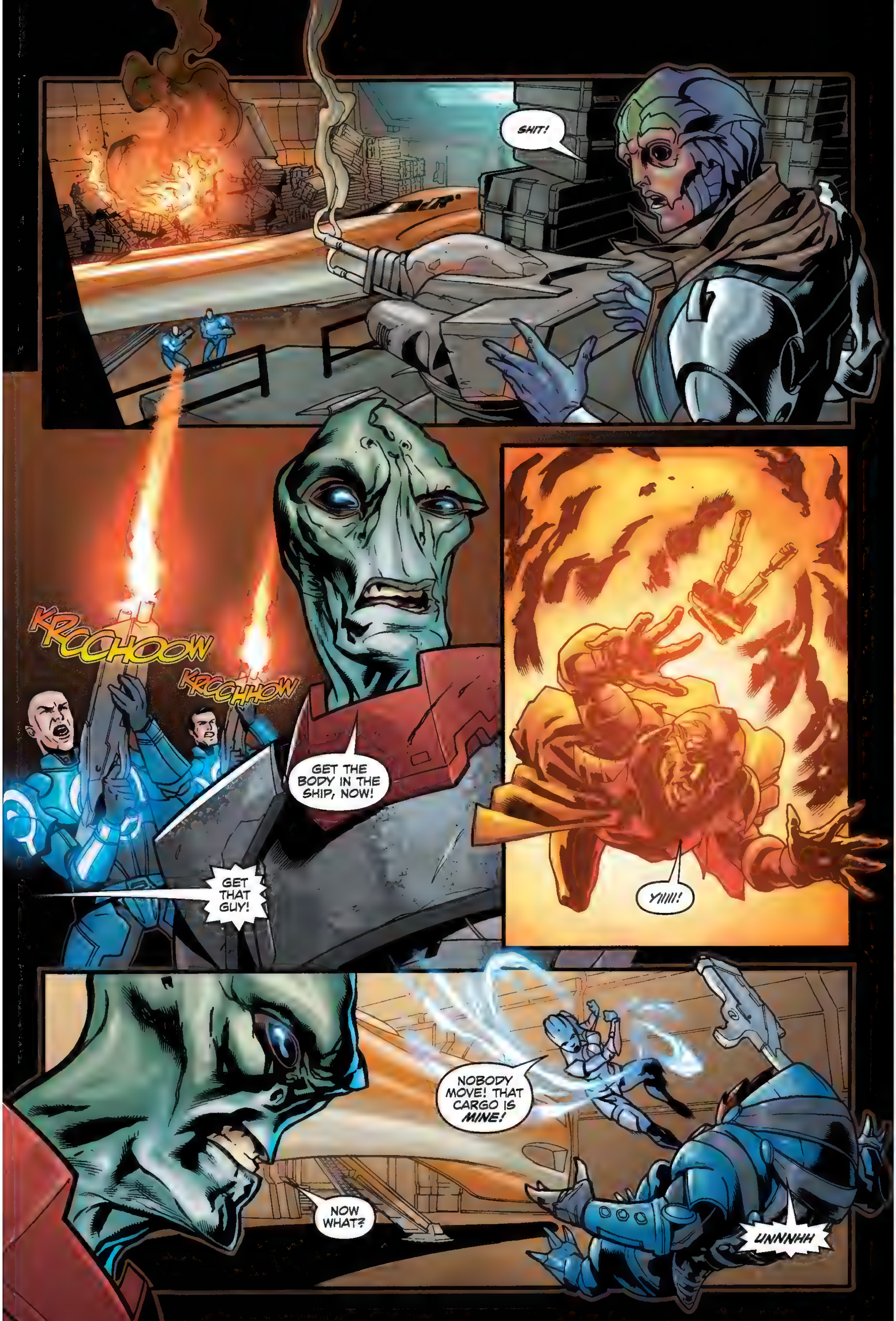

--AND MUCH STRANGER ITEMS, COVETED BY THOSE IN THE PRESENT...
THAT'S THEM, ALL RIGHT--
--LOOKS LIKE WE EVEN GOT HERE FIRST. SMOOTH AND EASY. DID I TELL YOU ARIA KNOWS HER STATION?
SHE SEEMS TO KNOW THE *POPULAR PLACES,* ANYWAY--
--LOOK THERE!

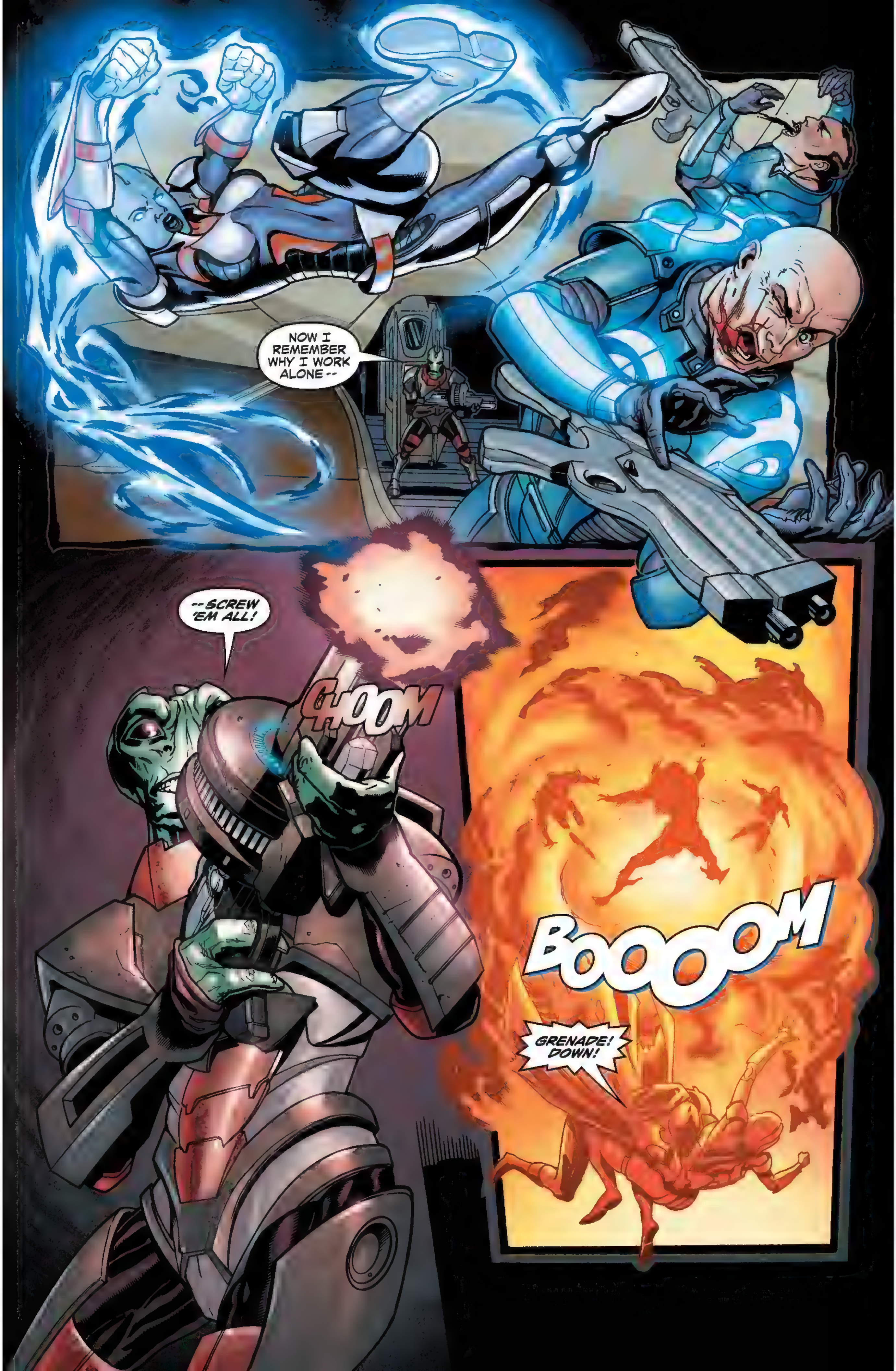

DAMN!
DID I SAY EASY? FORGET IT--
"--THAT'S *TAZZIK!*"
THEY GROW 'EM LARGE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, DON'T THEY?
AND THEY GROW THEM STUPID IN YOURS. *WHERE IS IT?*

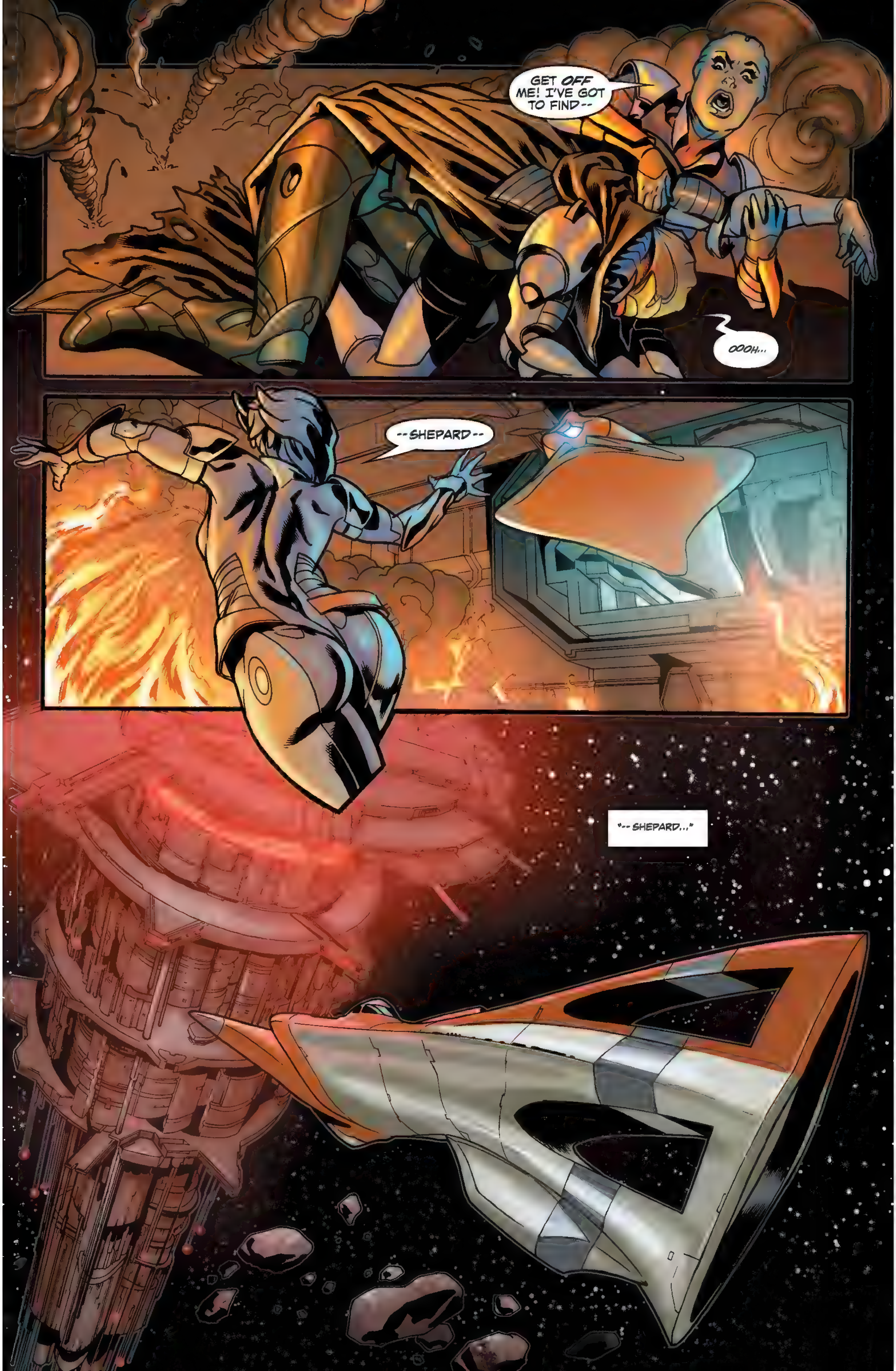

THE BROKER WOULD SEND *TAZ* TO MAKE THE PICK-UP. THIS DAY JUST GETS BRIGHTER ALL THE TIME.
WHAT'S THE MATTER? WHO IS THAT?
TAZ IS THE SHADOW BROKER'S ONE AND ONLY *HIT MAN* --FOR THE RARE TIMES WHEN HE WANTS SOMETHING--
--OR *SOMEONE*-- TAKEN CARE OF. THE MERCS ARE JUST HIRED MUSCLE. TAZ, HE CALLS FOR RESULTS--
"--RESULTS HE USUALLY GETS!"
IDENTIFICATION LOOKS RIGHT. IS THIS EVERYTHING YOU FOUND?
YEP. SURPRISED THERE WAS *THAT* MUCH--HUMAN BODY MUST BE ABLE TO TAKE SOME REAL PUNISHMENT.
I'VE KNOWN A FEW THAT COULDN'T.
YOUR CREDITS ARE HERE. IF THIS ISN'T LEGIT, I'LL BE BACK FOR THEM--AND *YOU* GO IN THE BOX!

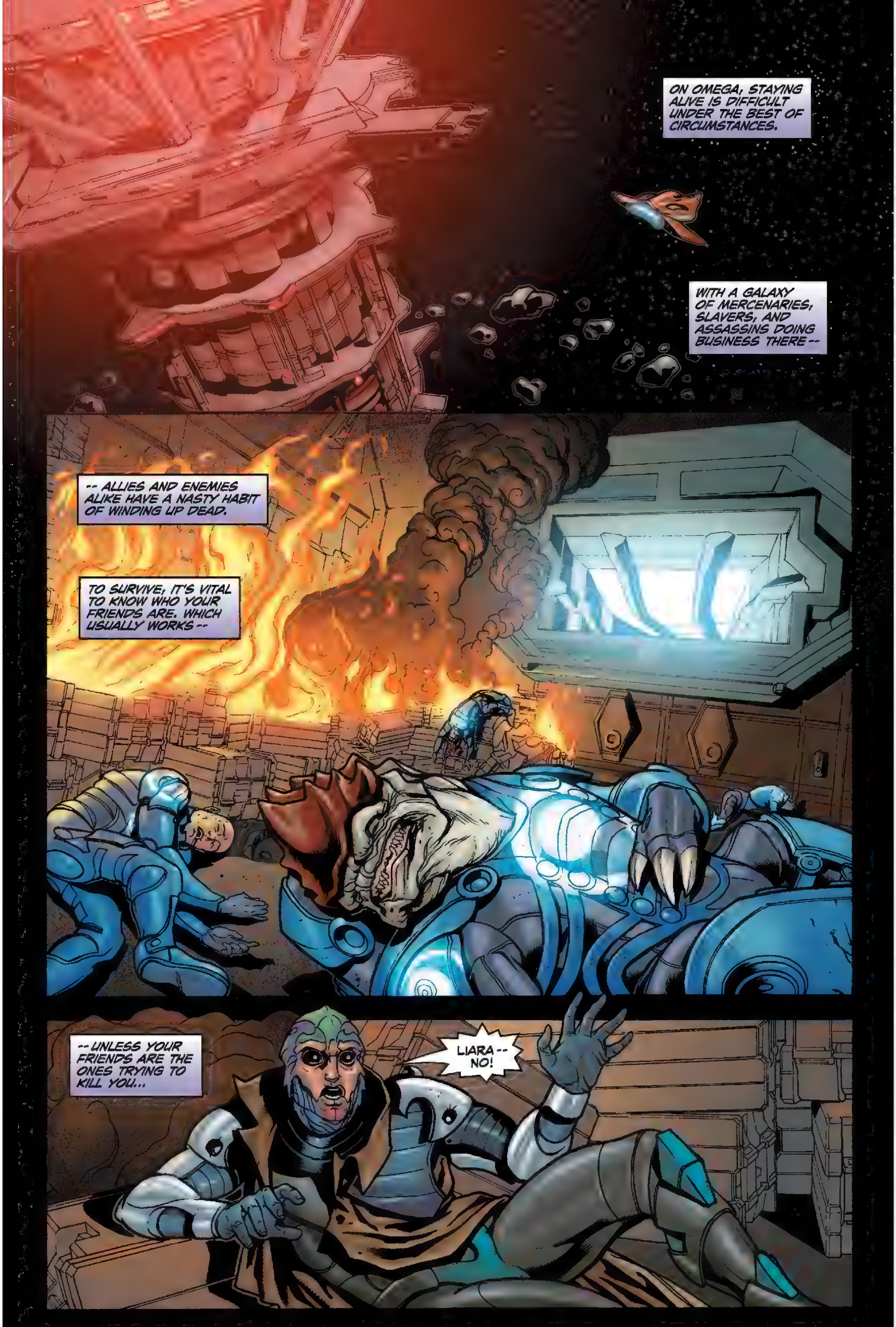

THAT'S IT! IT'S SHEPARD!
WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
IT'S TOO RISKY, LIARA! THERE'S GOT TO BE ANOTHER WAY!
I'VE CROSSED THE GALAXY FOR THIS, FERON! I'M NOT GOING TO GIVE YOU TIME TO CHANGE YOUR MIND!
YOU'RE -- YOU'RE AFRAID I'M GOING TO *RUN?*
I'M MORE AFRAID YOU'LL SWITCH SIDES AGAIN. I HAVEN'T LET YOU OUT OF MY SIGHT FOR FEAR YOU'LL GET A BETTER OFFER!
HMM. NO, I HAVE ANOTHER IDEA --
-- CHECK OUT THE OLD DEFENSE GUNS UP THERE. I THINK THEY'RE STILL FUNCTIONAL.
ONE SHOT'LL DISABLE TAZZIK'S SHIP BEFORE THEY CAN GO ANYWHERE!
DO IT -- THEY'RE STARTING TO MOVE SHEPARD. I NEED TO GET CLOSER!

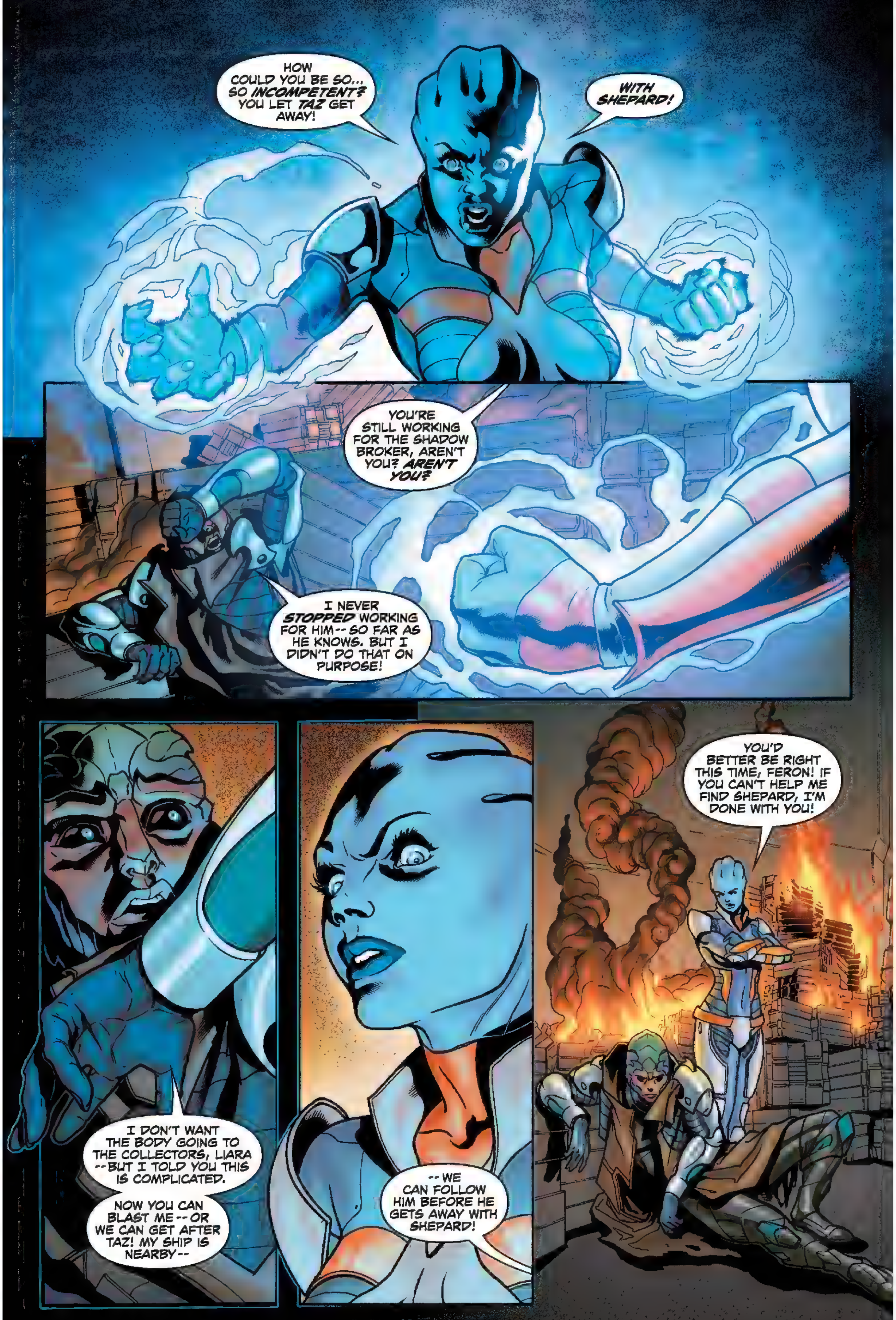

NO. PUT IT DOWN!
WHAT'S THE PROBLEM? IT'S NOT LIKE SHEPARD'S GONNA GET *MORE* DAMAGED!
NO, BUT ***YOU*** MIGHT! I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE --
-- I'VE GOT SOMEPLACE TO BE. LET'S GET THIS GOING BEFORE SOMETHING GOES --
KRAAAAK-KOOOMMM

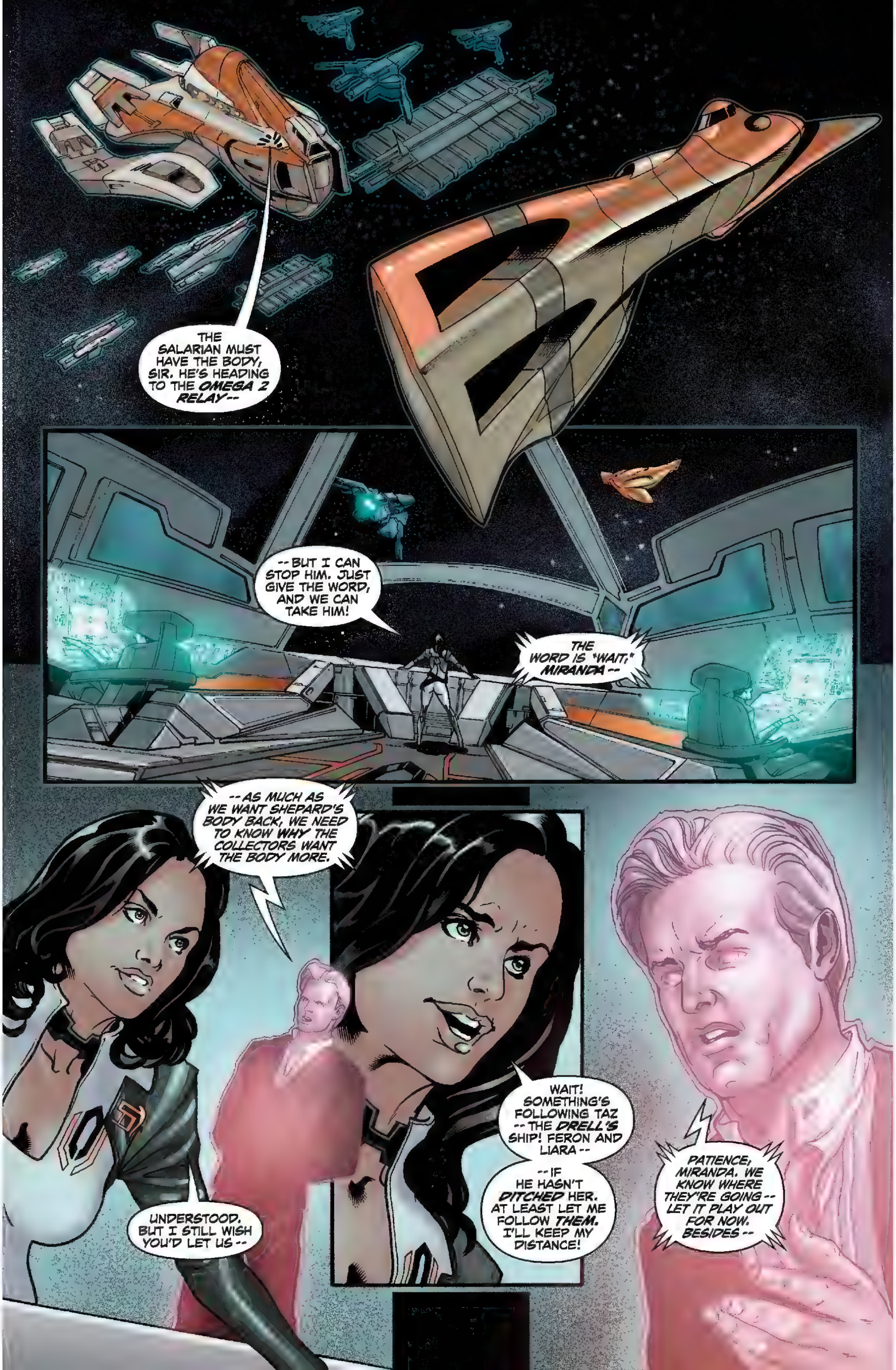

SHIT!
KROOCHOOW
KROOCHHOW
GET THE BODY IN THE SHIP, NOW!
GET THAT GUY!
YIIIII!
NOBODY MOVE! THAT CARGO IS *MINE!*
NOW WHAT?
UNNNHH

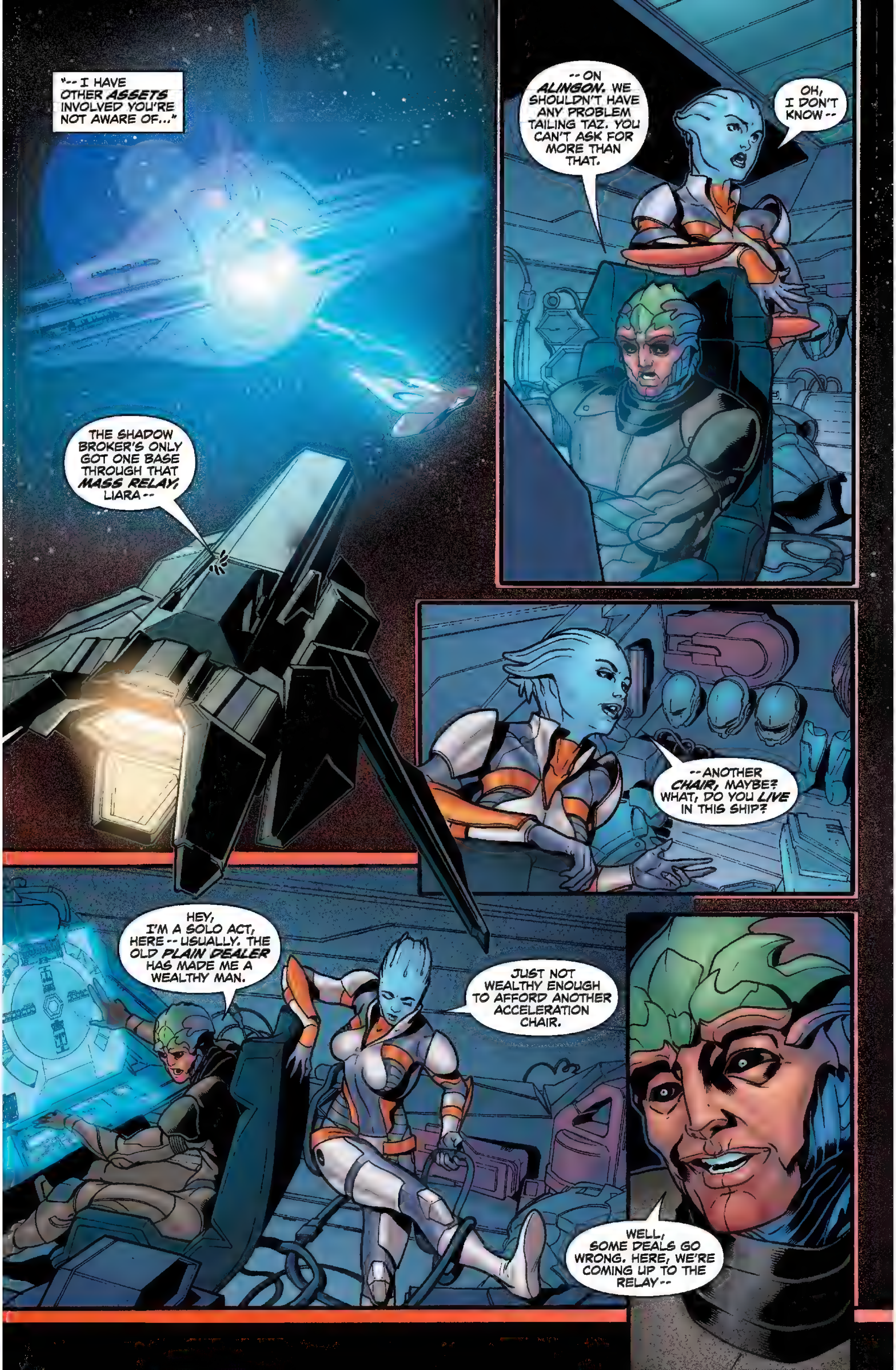

NOW I REMEMBER WHY I WORK ALONE --
-- SCREW 'EM ALL!
CHOOM
BOOOOOM
GRENADE! DOWN!

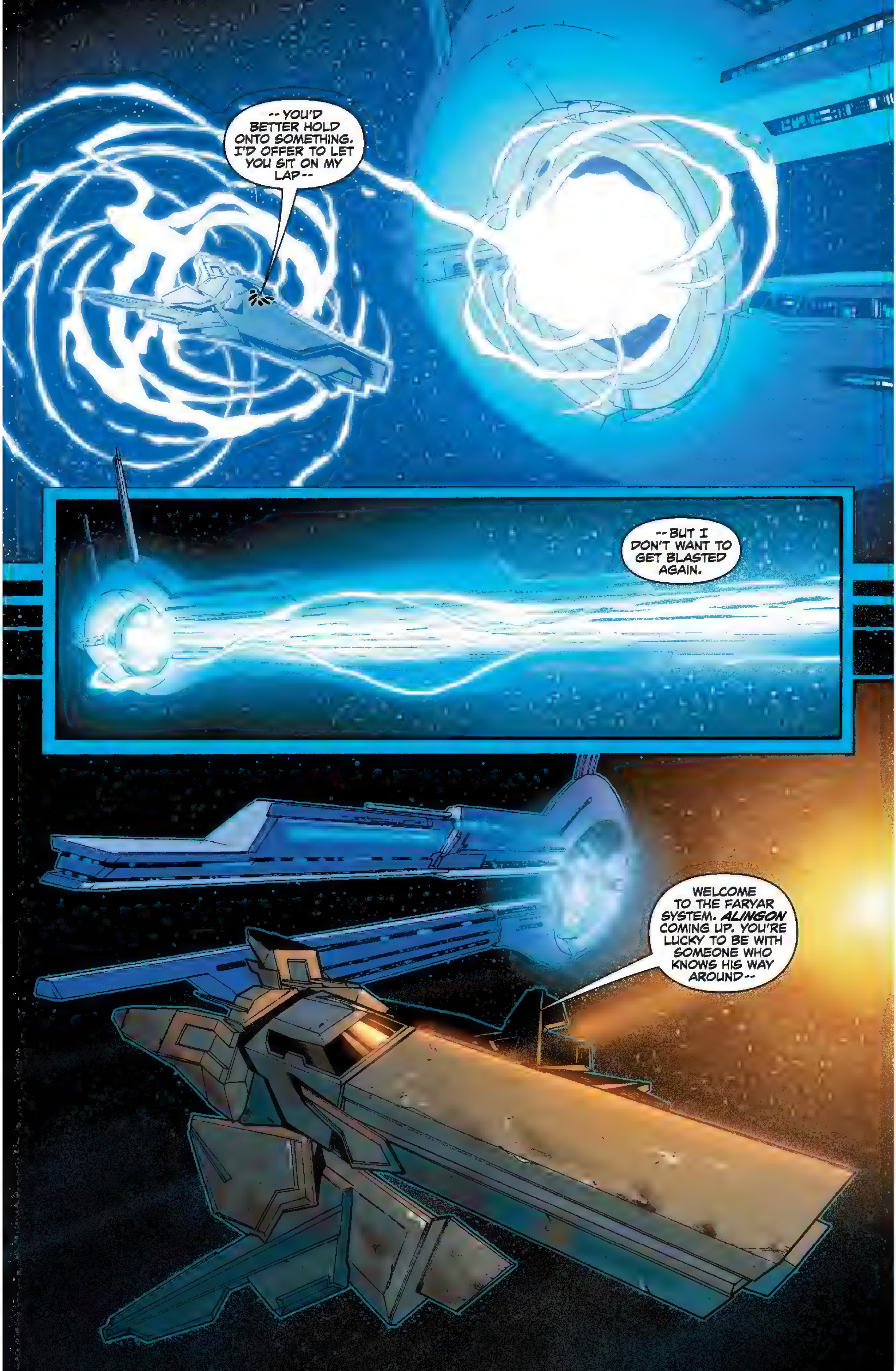

GET *OFF* ME! I'VE GOT TO FIND--
OOOH...
--SHEPARD--
"--SHEPARD..."

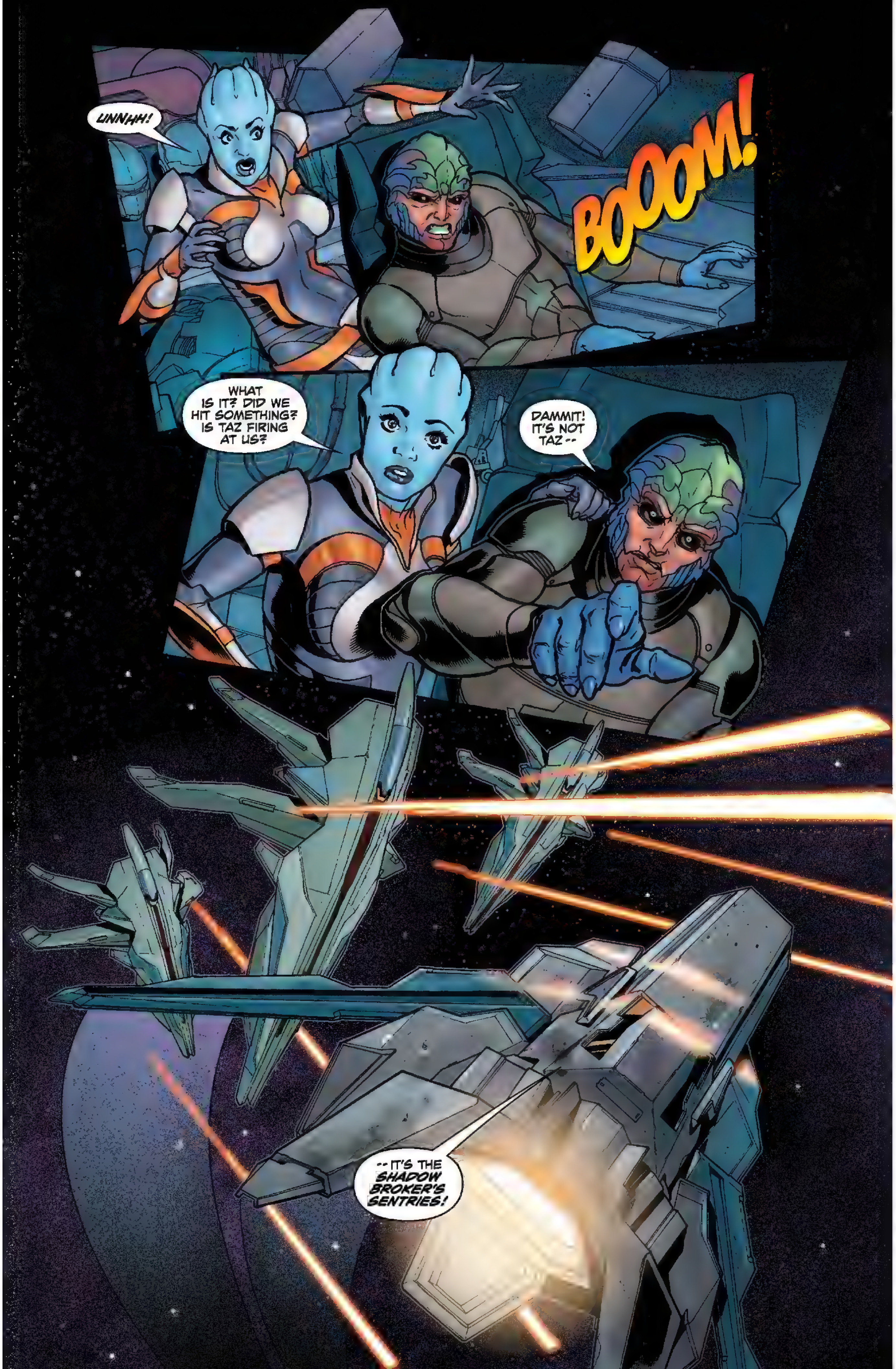

ON OMEGA, STAYING ALIVE IS DIFFICULT UNDER THE BEST OF CIRCUMSTANCES.
WITH A GALAXY OF MERCENARIES, SLAVERS, AND ASSASSINS DOING BUSINESS THERE --
-- ALLIES AND ENEMIES ALIKE HAVE A NASTY HABIT OF WINDING UP DEAD.
TO SURVIVE, IT'S VITAL TO KNOW WHO YOUR FRIENDS ARE. WHICH USUALLY WORKS --
-- UNLESS YOUR FRIENDS ARE THE ONES TRYING TO KILL YOU...
LIARA -- NO!

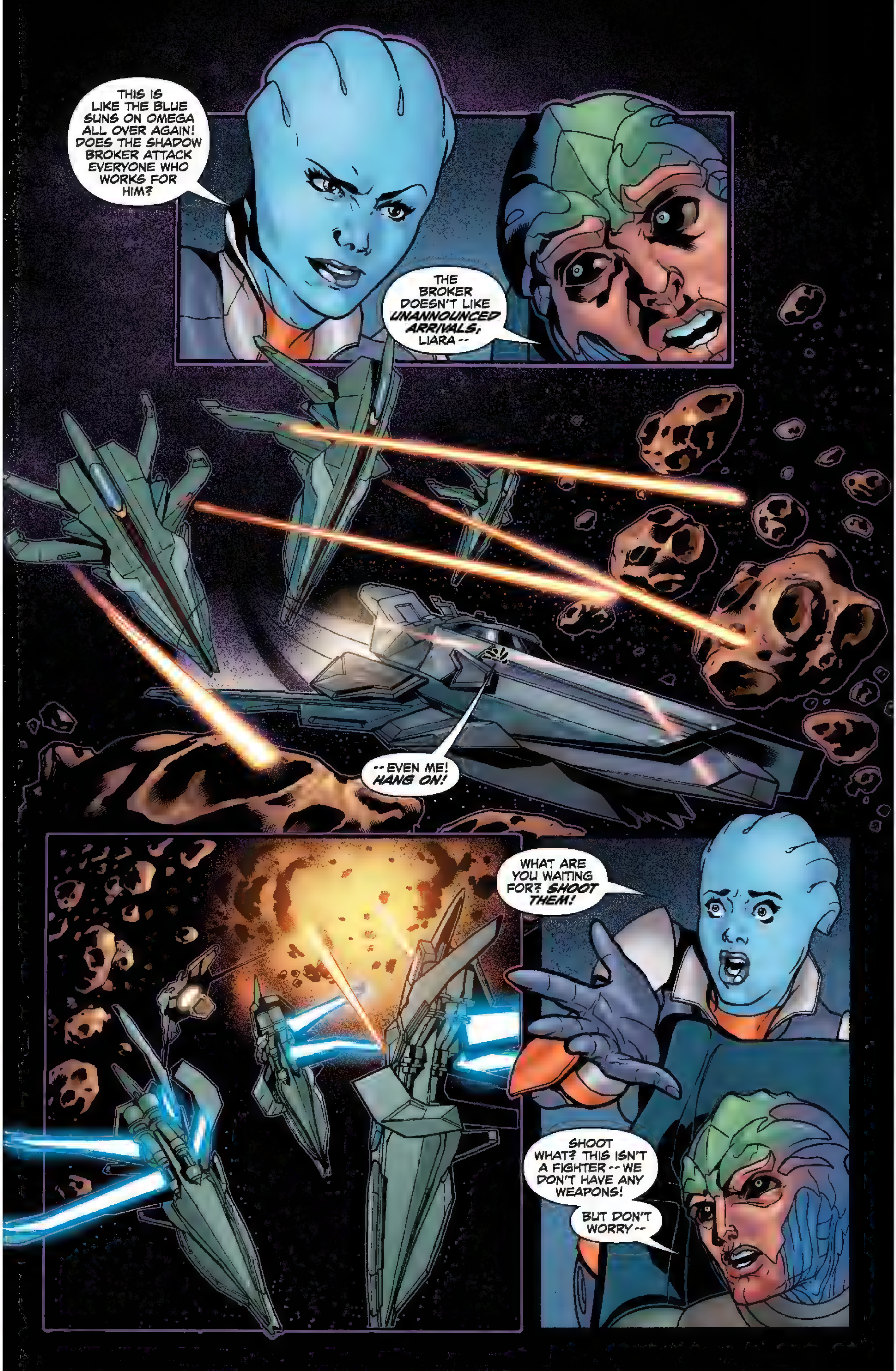

HOW COULD YOU BE SO... SO *INCOMPETENT?* YOU LET *TAZ* GET AWAY!
WITH SHEPARD!
YOU'RE STILL WORKING FOR THE SHADOW BROKER, AREN'T YOU? *AREN'T YOU?*
I NEVER *STOPPED* WORKING FOR HIM-- SO FAR AS HE KNOWS. BUT I DIDN'T DO THAT ON PURPOSE!
I DON'T WANT THE BODY GOING TO THE COLLECTORS, LIARA --BUT I TOLD YOU THIS IS COMPLICATED.
NOW YOU CAN BLAST ME--OR WE CAN GET AFTER TAZ! MY SHIP IS NEARBY--
--WE CAN FOLLOW HIM BEFORE HE GETS AWAY WITH SHEPARD!
YOU'D BETTER BE RIGHT THIS TIME, FERON! IF YOU CAN'T HELP ME FIND SHEPARD, I'M DONE WITH YOU!

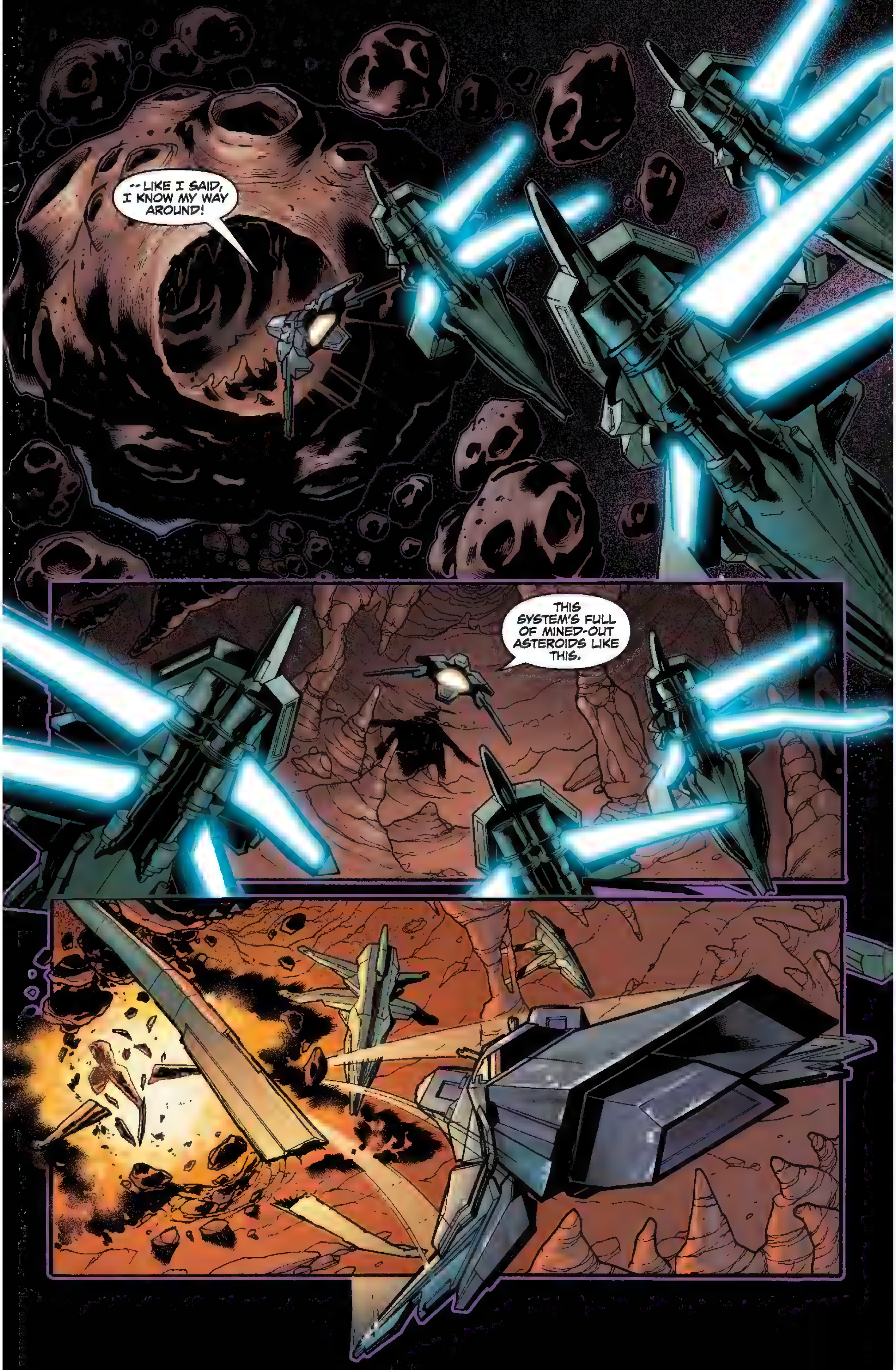

THE SALARIAN MUST HAVE THE BODY, SIR. HE'S HEADING TO THE OMEGA 2 RELAY--
--BUT I CAN STOP HIM. JUST GIVE THE WORD, AND WE CAN TAKE HIM!
THE WORD IS "WAIT," MIRANDA--
--AS MUCH AS WE WANT SHEPARD'S BODY BACK, WE NEED TO KNOW WHY THE COLLECTORS WANT THE BODY MORE.
UNDERSTOOD. BUT I STILL WISH YOU'D LET US--
WAIT! SOMETHING'S FOLLOWING TAZ --THE DRELL'S SHIP! FERON AND LIARA--
--IF HE HASN'T DITCHED HER. AT LEAST LET ME FOLLOW THEM. I'LL KEEP MY DISTANCE!
PATIENCE, MIRANDA. WE KNOW WHERE THEY'RE GOING-- LET IT PLAY OUT FOR NOW. BESIDES--

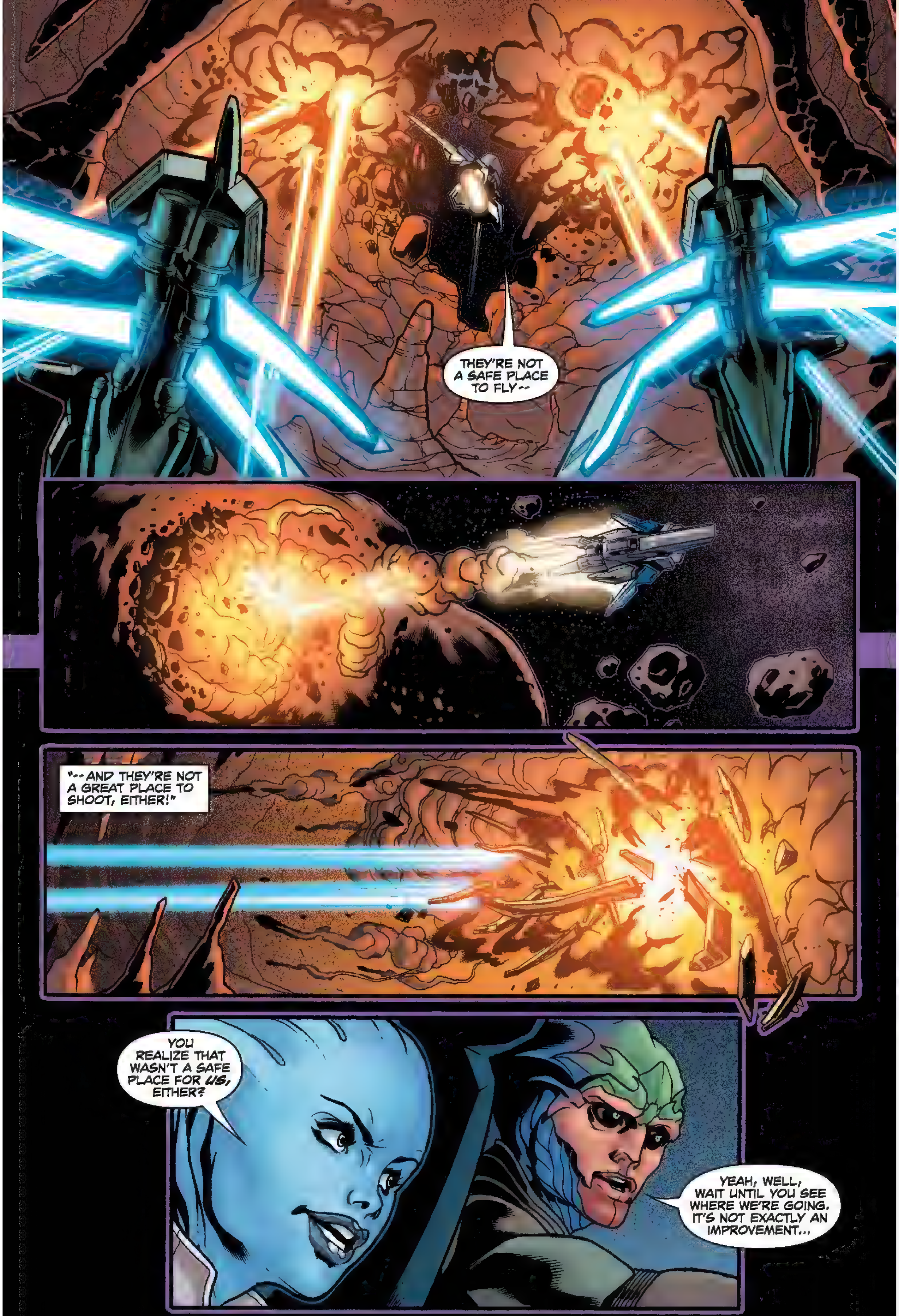

"-- I HAVE OTHER ASSETS INVOLVED YOU'RE NOT AWARE OF..."
THE SHADOW BROKER'S ONLY GOT ONE BASE THROUGH THAT MASS RELAY, LIARA --
-- ON ALINGON. WE SHOULDN'T HAVE ANY PROBLEM TAILING TAZ. YOU CAN'T ASK FOR MORE THAN THAT.
OH, I DON'T KNOW --
-- ANOTHER CHAIR, MAYBE? WHAT, DO YOU LIVE IN THIS SHIP?
HEY, I'M A SOLO ACT, HERE -- USUALLY. THE OLD PLAIN DEALER HAS MADE ME A WEALTHY MAN.
JUST NOT WEALTHY ENOUGH TO AFFORD ANOTHER ACCELERATION CHAIR.
WELL, SOME DEALS GO WRONG. HERE, WE'RE COMING UP TO THE RELAY --

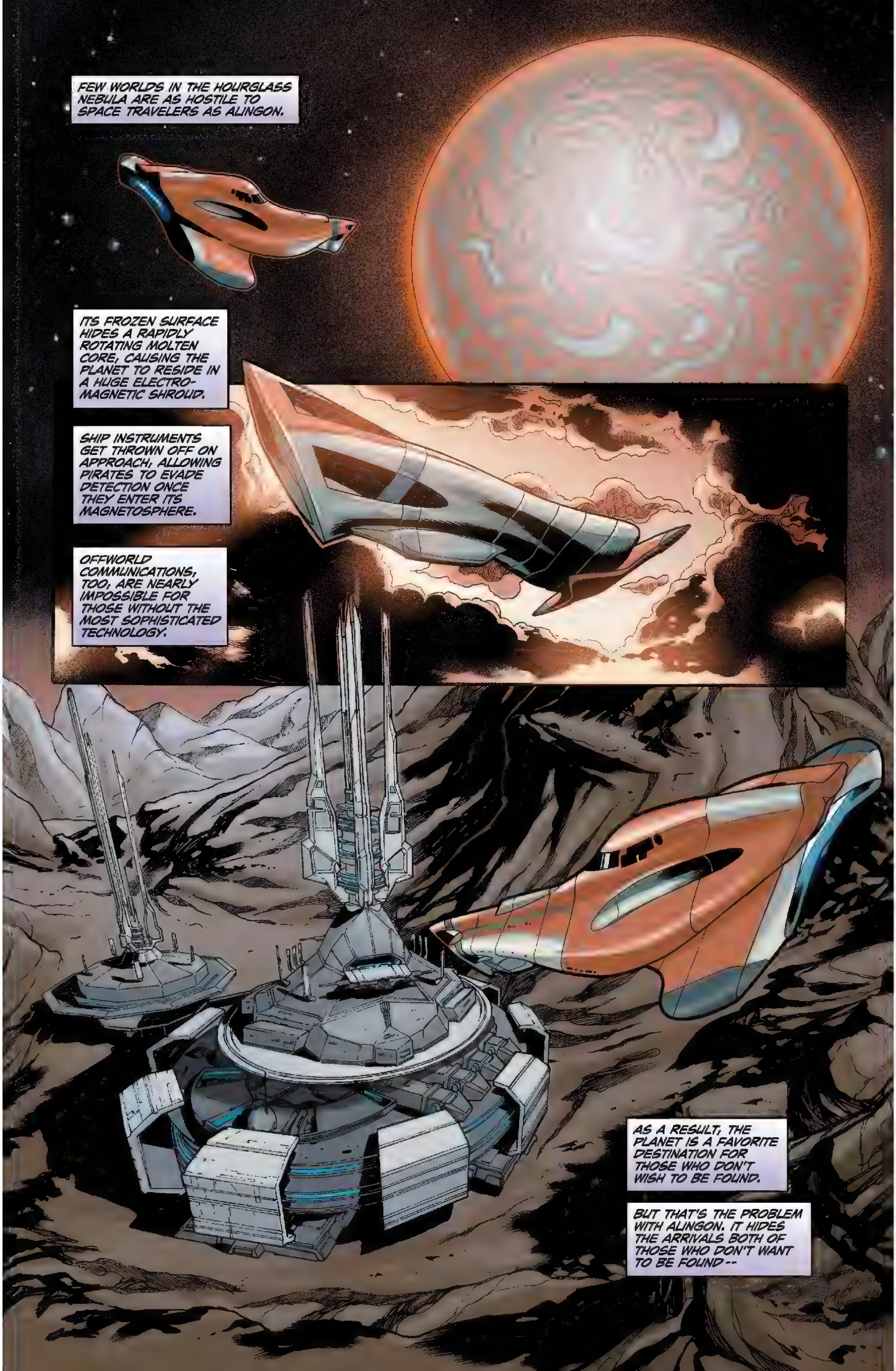

--YOU'D BETTER HOLD ONTO SOMETHING. I'D OFFER TO LET YOU SIT ON MY LAP--
--BUT I DON'T WANT TO GET BLASTED AGAIN.
WELCOME TO THE FARYAR SYSTEM. ALINGON COMING UP. YOU'RE LUCKY TO BE WITH SOMEONE WHO KNOWS HIS WAY AROUND--

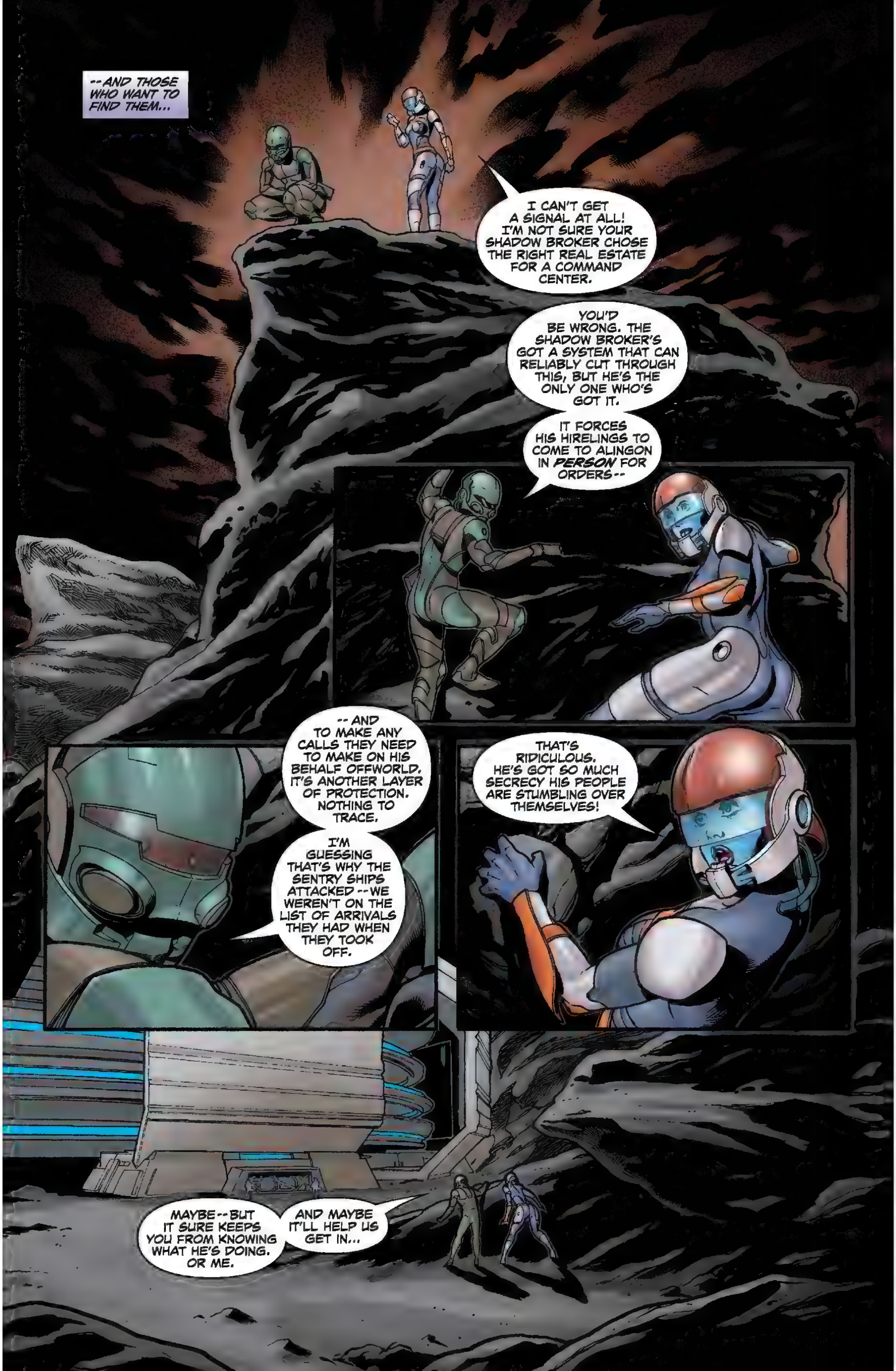

UNNHH!
BOOOM!
WHAT IS IT? DID WE HIT SOMETHING? IS TAZ FIRING AT US?
DAMMIT! IT'S NOT TAZ --
-- IT'S THE *SHADOW BROKER'S SENTRIES!*

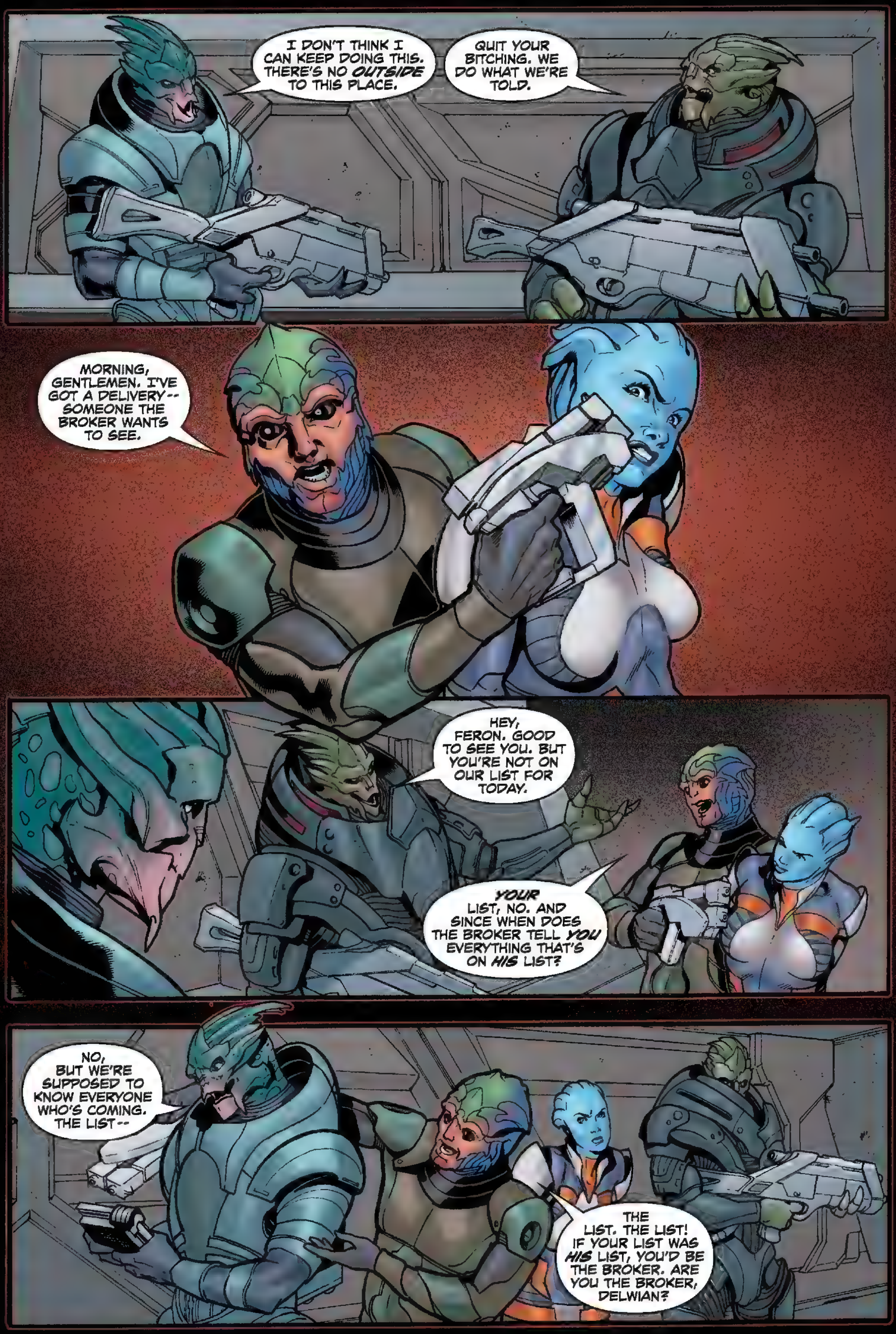

THIS IS LIKE THE BLUE SUNS ON OMEGA ALL OVER AGAIN! DOES THE SHADOW BROKER ATTACK EVERYONE WHO WORKS FOR HIM?
THE BROKER DOESN'T LIKE *UNANNOUNCED ARRIVALS,* LIARA --
-- EVEN ME! *HANG ON!*
WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? *SHOOT THEM!*
SHOOT WHAT? THIS ISN'T A FIGHTER -- WE DON'T HAVE ANY WEAPONS!
BUT DON'T WORRY --

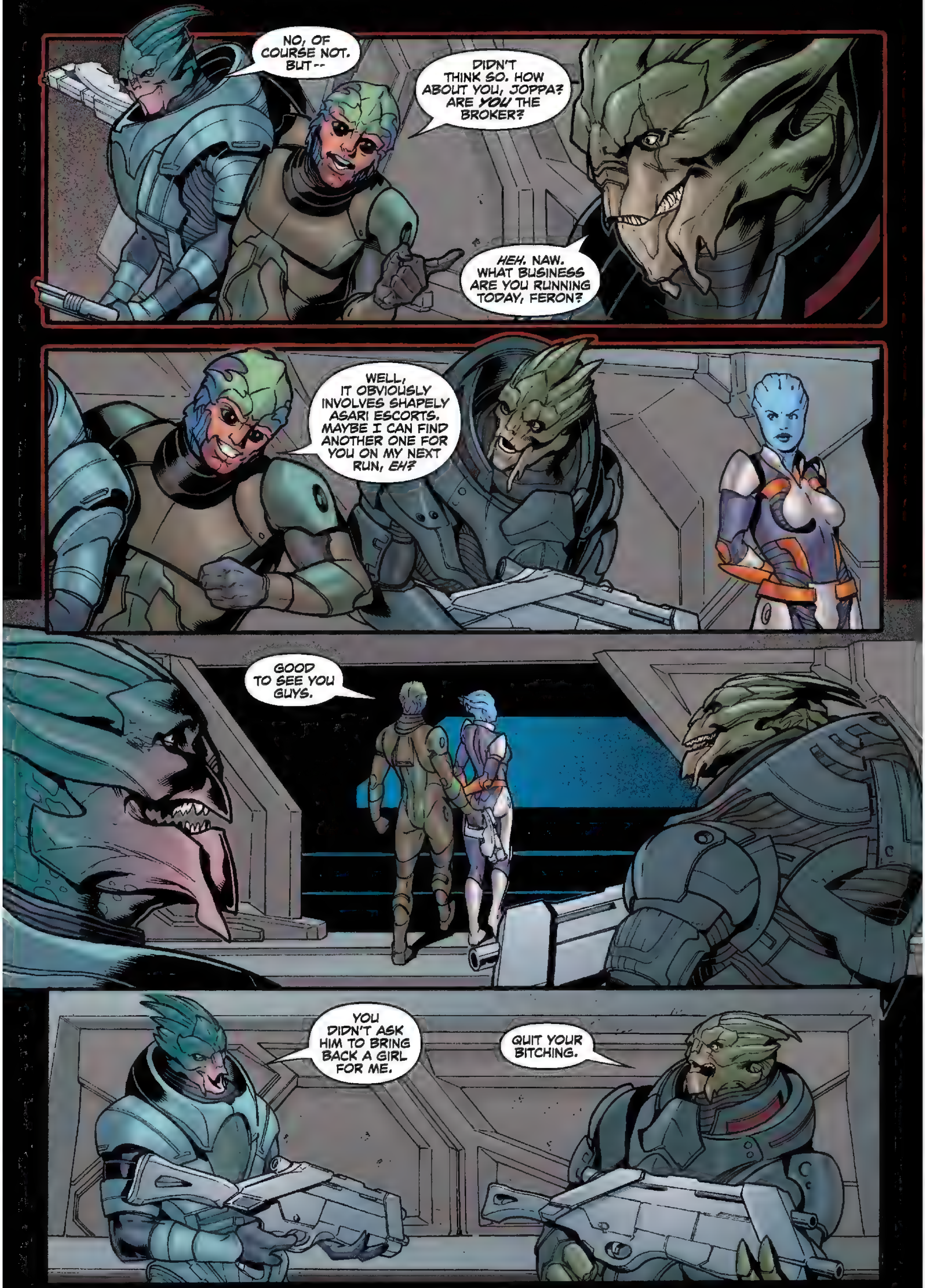

--LIKE I SAID, I KNOW MY WAY AROUND!
THIS SYSTEM'S FULL OF MINED-OUT ASTEROIDS LIKE THIS.

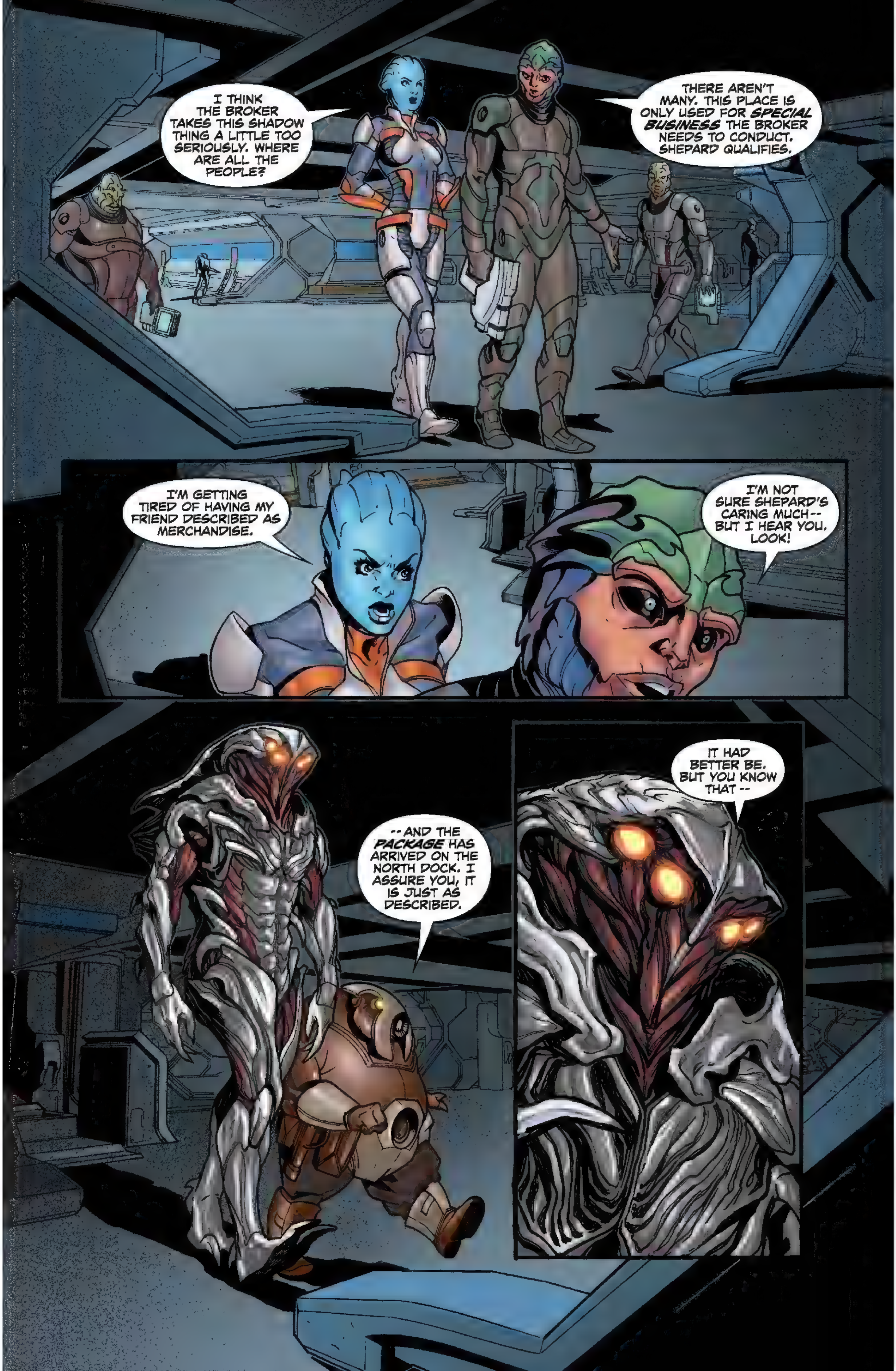

THEY'RE NOT A SAFE PLACE TO FLY--
"--AND THEY'RE NOT A GREAT PLACE TO SHOOT, EITHER!"
YOU REALIZE THAT WASN'T A SAFE PLACE FOR *US*, EITHER?
YEAH, WELL, WAIT UNTIL YOU SEE WHERE WE'RE GOING. IT'S NOT EXACTLY AN IMPROVEMENT...

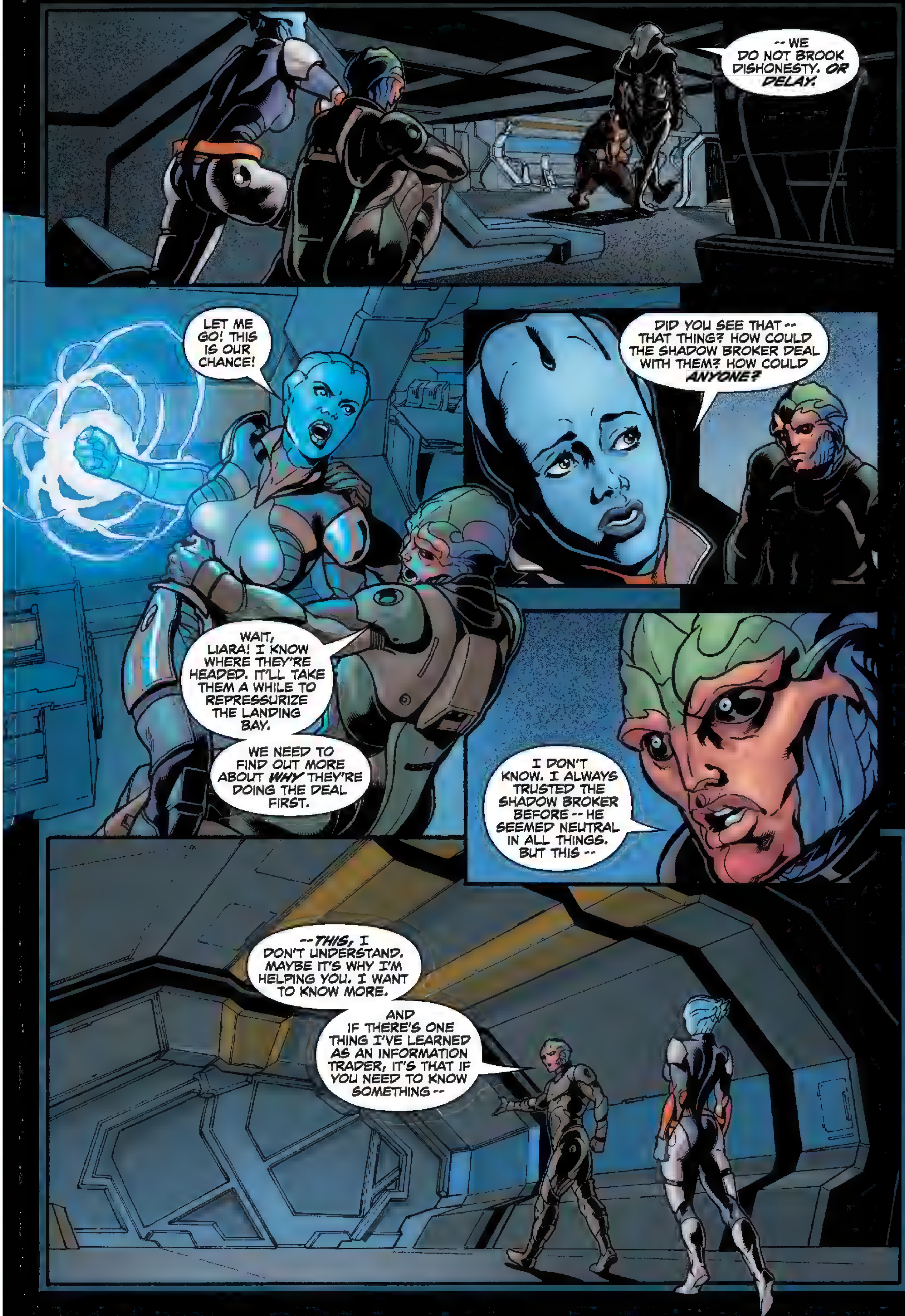

FEW WORLDS IN THE HOURGLASS NEBULA ARE AS HOSTILE TO SPACE TRAVELERS AS ALINGON.
ITS FROZEN SURFACE HIDES A RAPIDLY ROTATING MOLTEN CORE, CAUSING THE PLANET TO RESIDE IN A HUGE ELECTROMAGNETIC SHROUD.
SHIP INSTRUMENTS GET THROWN OFF ON APPROACH, ALLOWING PIRATES TO EVADE DETECTION ONCE THEY ENTER ITS MAGNETOSPHERE.
OFFWORLD COMMUNICATIONS, TOO, ARE NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR THOSE WITHOUT THE MOST SOPHISTICATED TECHNOLOGY.
AS A RESULT, THE PLANET IS A FAVORITE DESTINATION FOR THOSE WHO DON'T WISH TO BE FOUND.
BUT THAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH ALINGON. IT HIDES THE ARRIVALS BOTH OF THOSE WHO DON'T WANT TO BE FOUND --

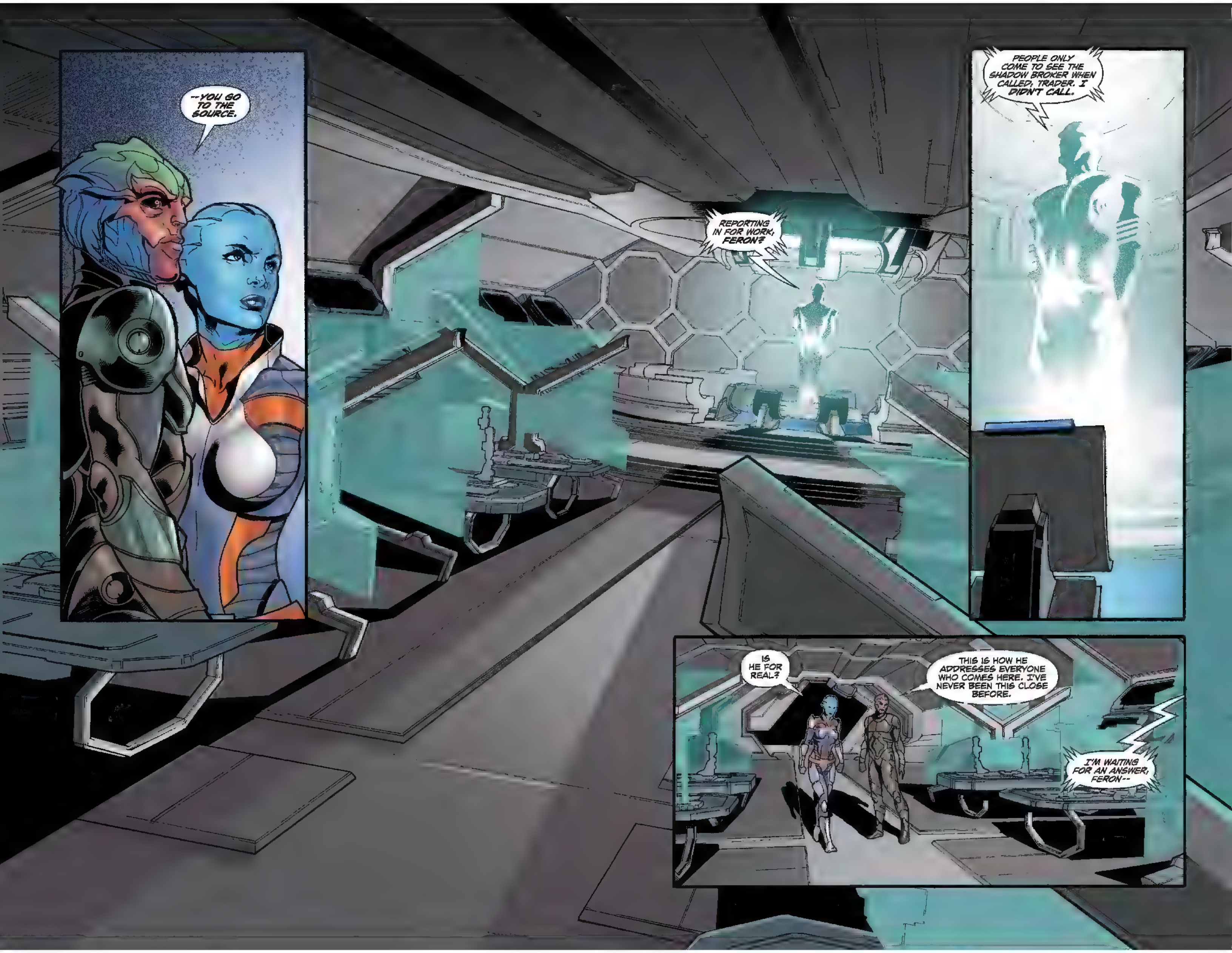

--AND THOSE WHO WANT TO FIND THEM...
I CAN'T GET A SIGNAL AT ALL! I'M NOT SURE YOUR SHADOW BROKER CHOSE THE RIGHT REAL ESTATE FOR A COMMAND CENTER.
YOU'D BE WRONG. THE SHADOW BROKER'S GOT A SYSTEM THAT CAN RELIABLY CUT THROUGH THIS, BUT HE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO'S GOT IT.
IT FORCES HIS HIRELINGS TO COME TO ALINGON IN *PERSON* FOR ORDERS--
--AND TO MAKE ANY CALLS THEY NEED TO MAKE ON HIS BEHALF OFFWORLD. IT'S ANOTHER LAYER OF PROTECTION. NOTHING TO TRACE.
I'M GUESSING THAT'S WHY THE SENTRY SHIPS ATTACKED--WE WEREN'T ON THE LIST OF ARRIVALS THEY HAD WHEN THEY TOOK OFF.
THAT'S RIDICULOUS. HE'S GOT SO MUCH SECRECY HIS PEOPLE ARE STUMBLING OVER THEMSELVES!
AND MAYBE IT'LL HELP US GET IN...
MAYBE--BUT IT SURE KEEPS YOU FROM KNOWING WHAT HE'S DOING. OR ME.

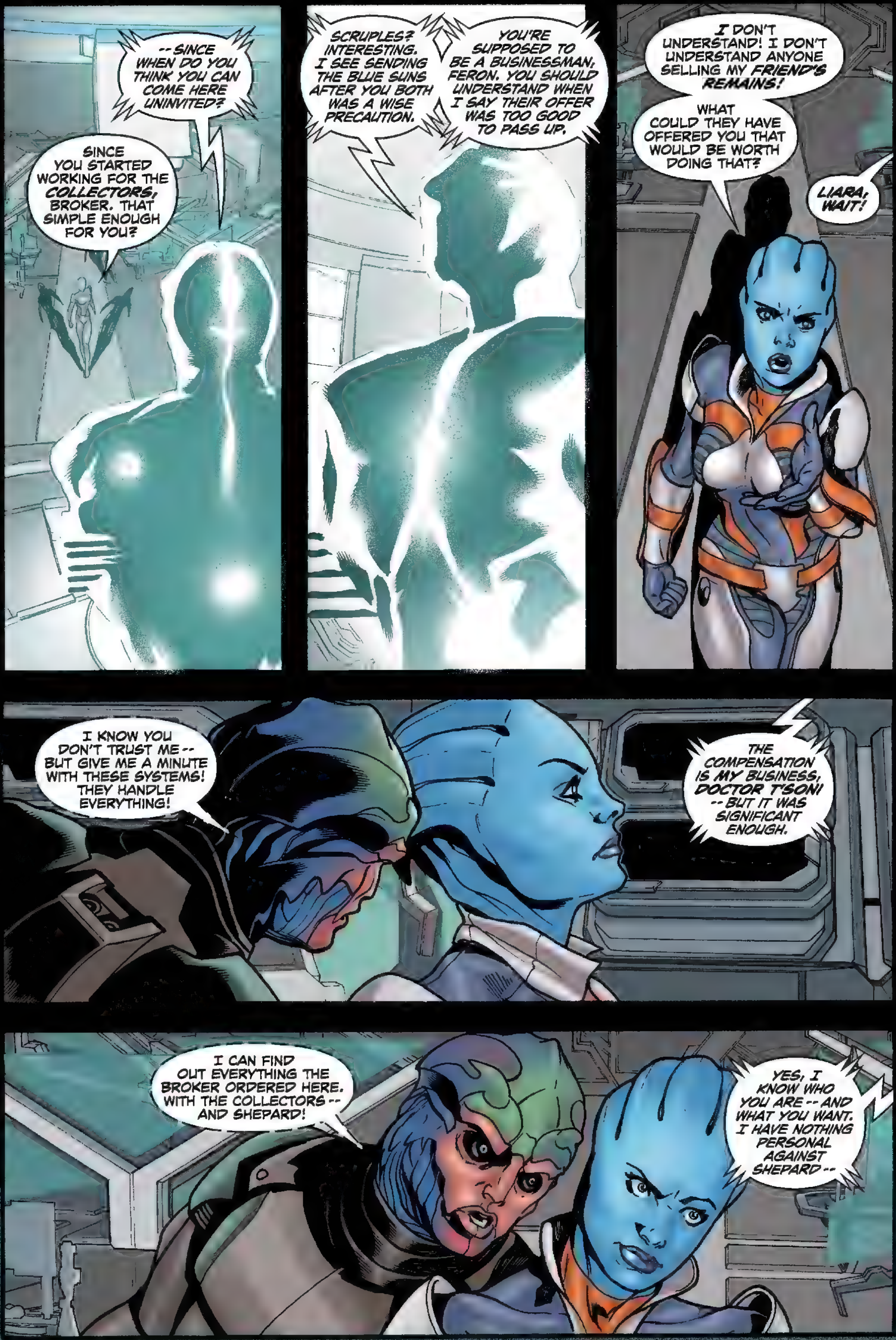

I DON'T THINK I CAN KEEP DOING THIS. THERE'S NO *OUTSIDE* TO THIS PLACE.
QUIT YOUR BITCHING. WE DO WHAT WE'RE TOLD.
MORNING, GENTLEMEN. I'VE GOT A DELIVERY-- SOMEONE THE BROKER WANTS TO SEE.
HEY, FERON. GOOD TO SEE YOU. BUT YOU'RE NOT ON OUR LIST FOR TODAY.
YOUR LIST, NO. AND SINCE WHEN DOES THE BROKER TELL *YOU* EVERYTHING THAT'S ON *HIS* LIST?
NO, BUT WE'RE SUPPOSED TO KNOW EVERYONE WHO'S COMING. THE LIST--
THE LIST. THE LIST! IF YOUR LIST WAS *HIS* LIST, YOU'D BE THE BROKER. ARE YOU THE BROKER, DELWIAN?

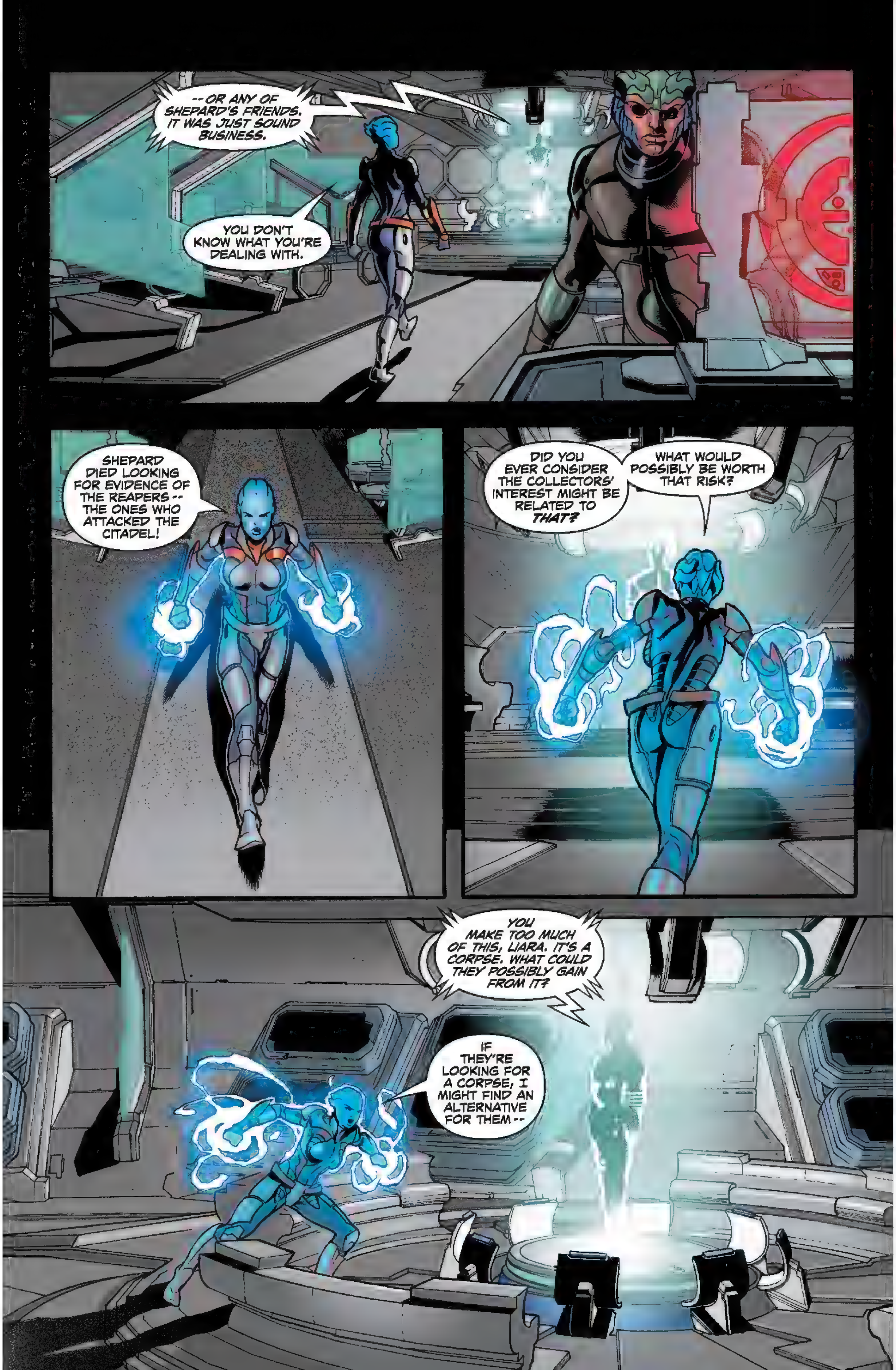

NO, OF COURSE NOT. BUT--
DIDN'T THINK SO. HOW ABOUT YOU, JOPPA? ARE *YOU* THE BROKER?
HEH. NAW. WHAT BUSINESS ARE YOU RUNNING TODAY, FERON?
WELL, IT OBVIOUSLY INVOLVES SHAPELY ASARI ESCORTS. MAYBE I CAN FIND ANOTHER ONE FOR YOU ON MY NEXT RUN, *EH?*
GOOD TO SEE YOU GUYS.
YOU DIDN'T ASK HIM TO BRING BACK A GIRL FOR ME.
QUIT YOUR BITCHING.

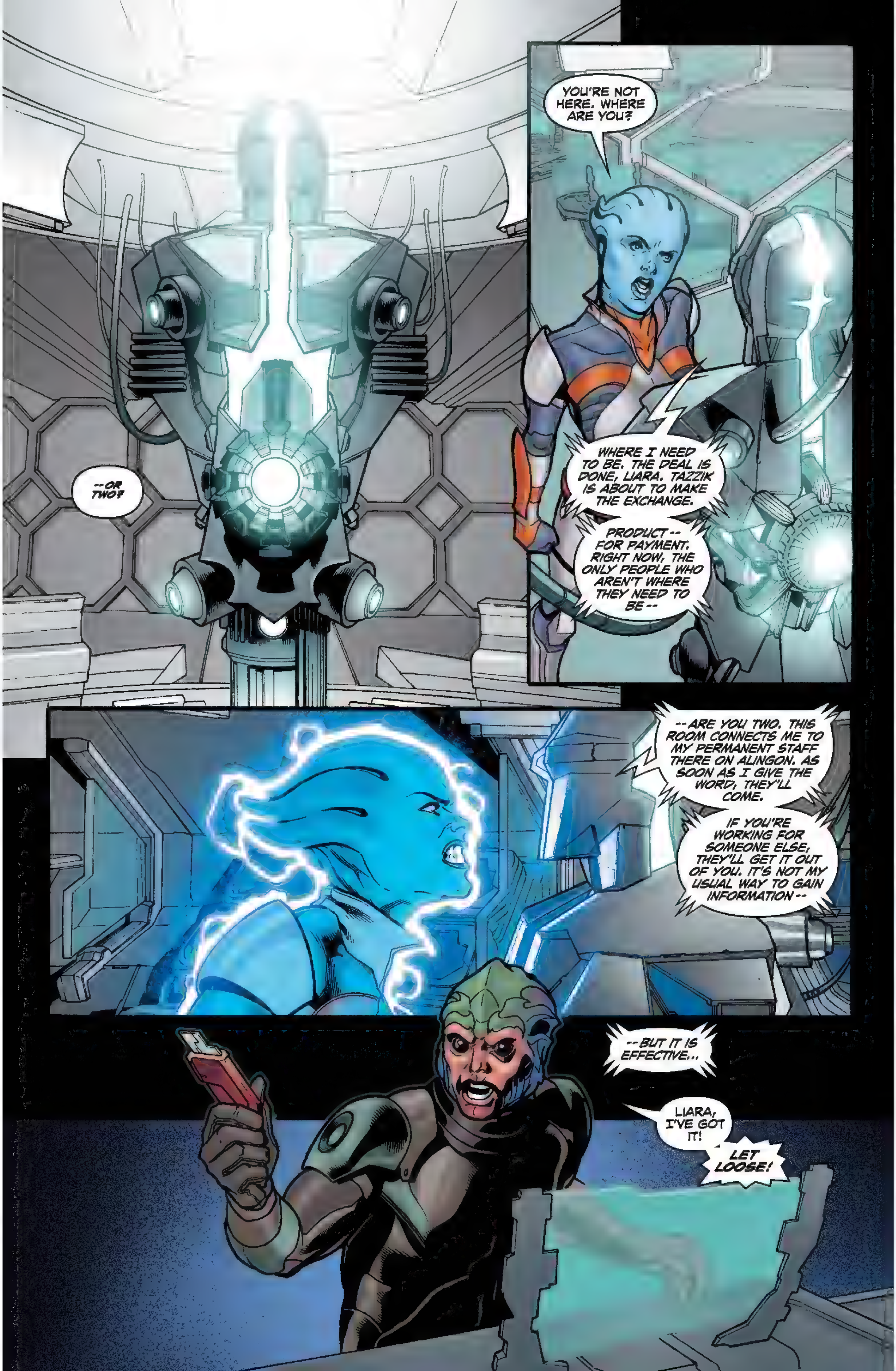

I THINK THE BROKER TAKES THIS SHADOW THING A LITTLE TOO SERIOUSLY. WHERE ARE ALL THE PEOPLE?
THERE AREN'T MANY. THIS PLACE IS ONLY USED FOR *SPECIAL BUSINESS* THE BROKER NEEDS TO CONDUCT. SHEPARD QUALIFIES.
I'M GETTING TIRED OF HAVING MY FRIEND DESCRIBED AS MERCHANDISE.
I'M NOT SURE SHEPARD'S CARING MUCH-- BUT I HEAR YOU. LOOK!
--AND THE *PACKAGE* HAS ARRIVED ON THE NORTH DOCK. I ASSURE YOU, IT IS JUST AS DESCRIBED.
IT HAD BETTER BE. BUT YOU KNOW THAT --

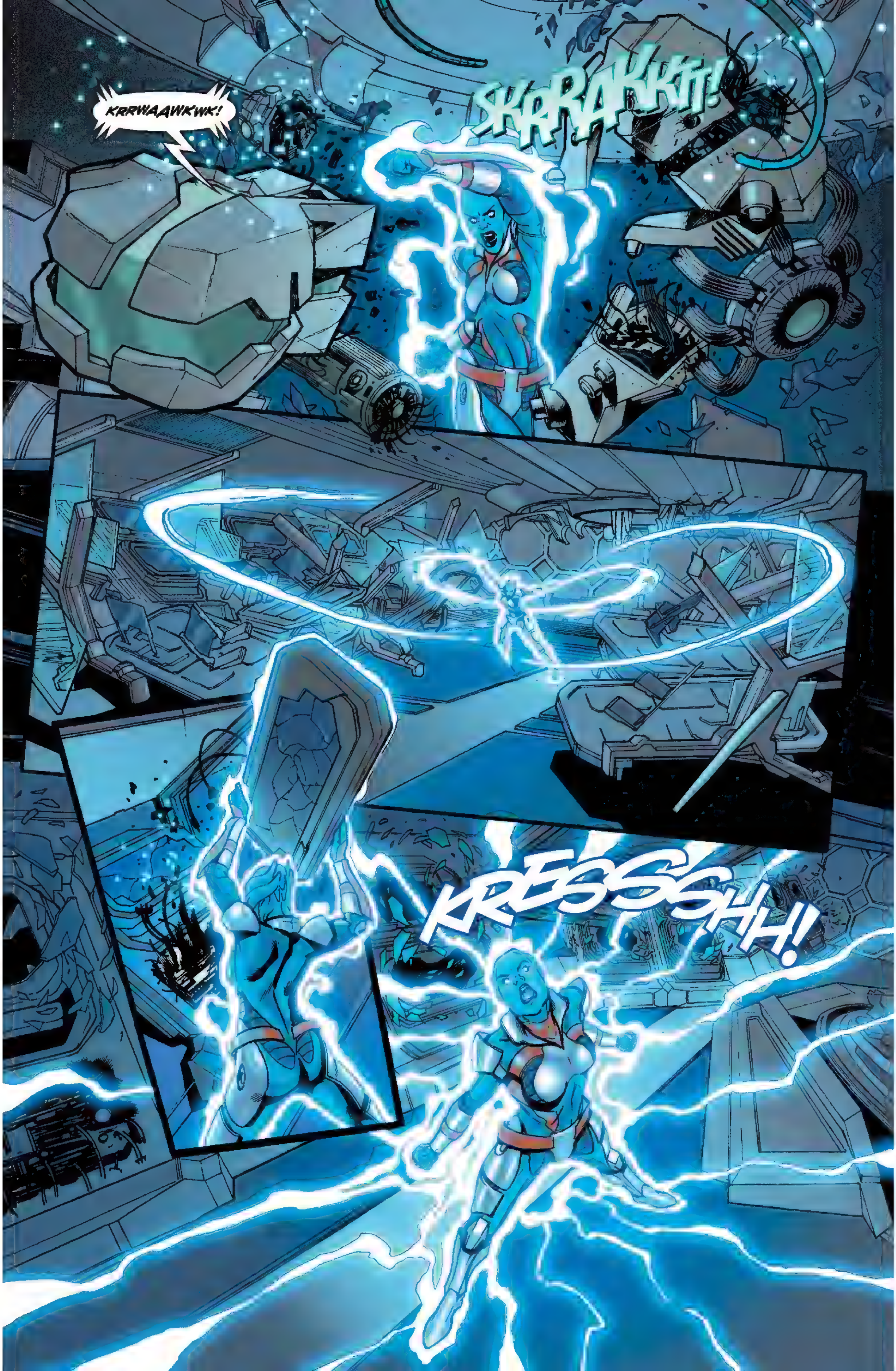

-- WE DO NOT BROOK DISHONESTY. *OR DELAY.*
LET ME GO! THIS IS OUR CHANCE!
WAIT, LIARA! I KNOW WHERE THEY'RE HEADED. IT'LL TAKE THEM A WHILE TO REPRESSURIZE THE LANDING BAY.
WE NEED TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT *WHY* THEY'RE DOING THE DEAL FIRST.
DID YOU SEE THAT -- THAT THING? HOW COULD THE SHADOW BROKER DEAL WITH THEM? HOW COULD *ANYONE?*
I DON'T KNOW. I ALWAYS TRUSTED THE SHADOW BROKER BEFORE -- HE SEEMED NEUTRAL IN ALL THINGS. BUT THIS --
-- *THIS,* I DON'T UNDERSTAND. MAYBE IT'S WHY I'M HELPING YOU. I WANT TO KNOW MORE.
AND IF THERE'S ONE THING I'VE LEARNED AS AN INFORMATION TRADER, IT'S THAT IF YOU NEED TO KNOW SOMETHING --

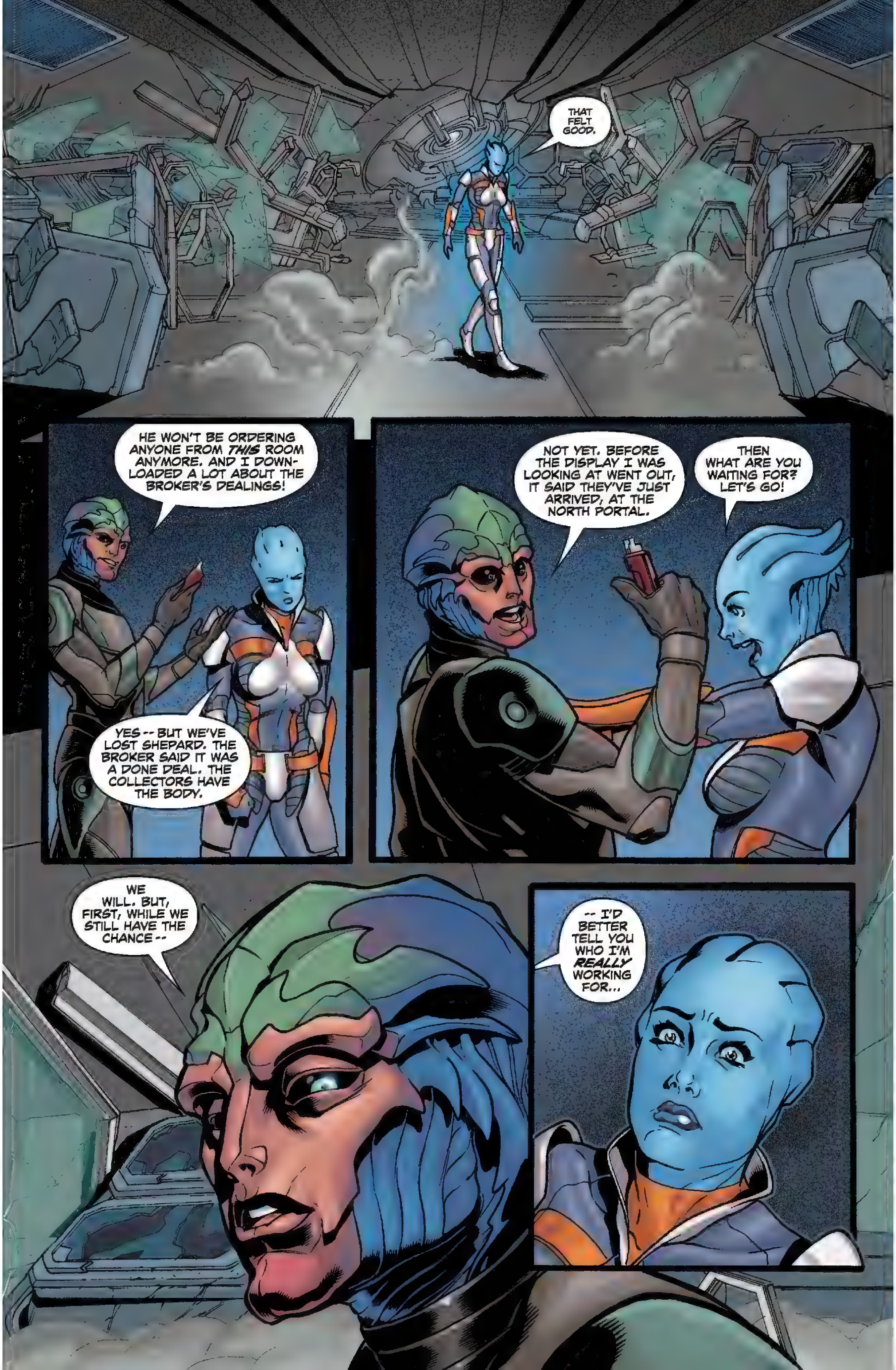

--YOU GO TO THE SOURCE.
REPORTING IN FOR WORK, FERON?
PEOPLE ONLY COME TO SEE THE SHADOW BROKER WHEN CALLED, TRADER. I DIDN'T CALL.
IS HE FOR REAL?
THIS IS HOW HE ADDRESSES EVERYONE WHO COMES HERE. I'VE NEVER BEEN THIS CLOSE BEFORE.
I'M WAITING FOR AN ANSWER, FERON--

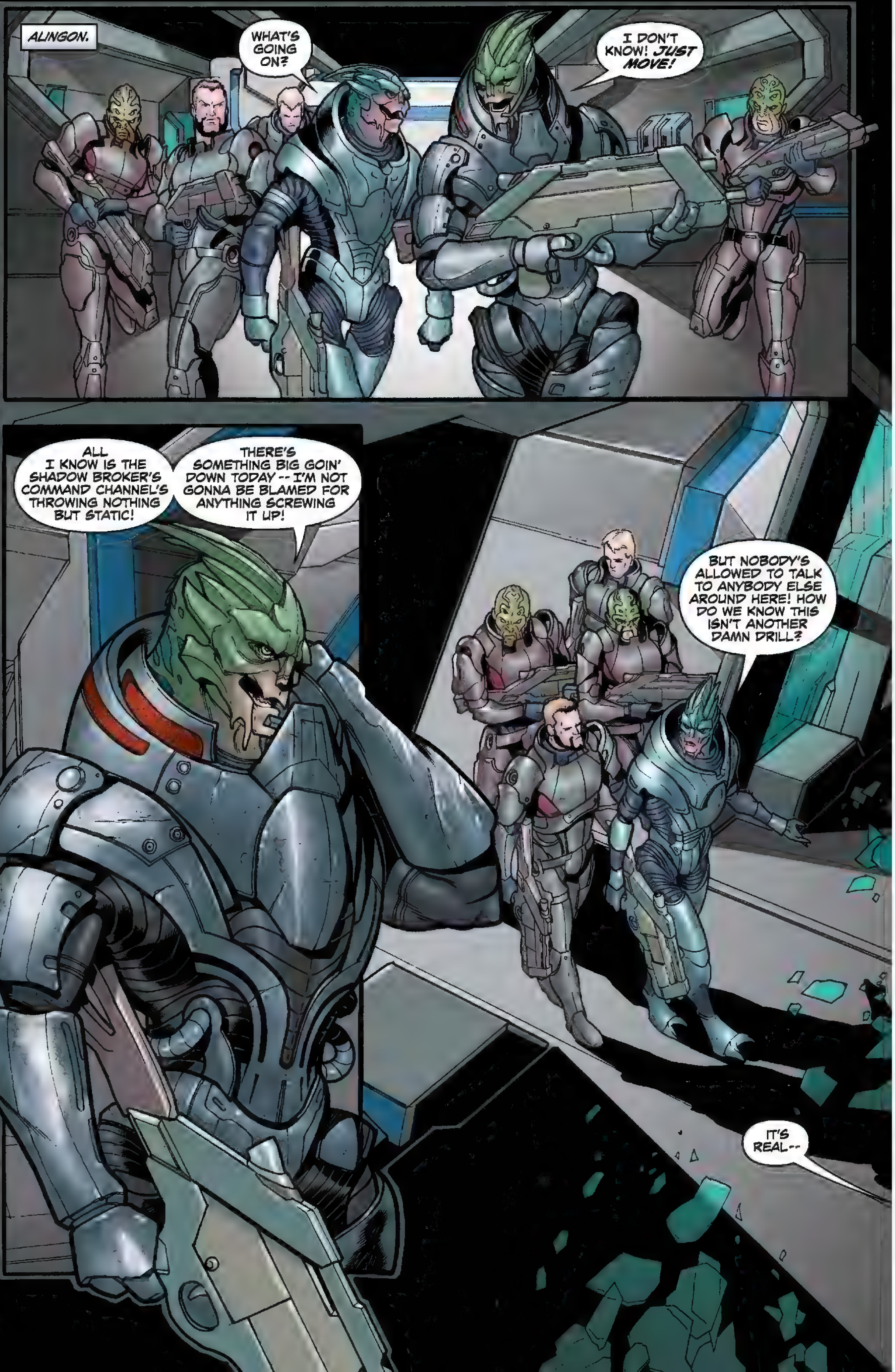

-- SINCE WHEN DO YOU THINK YOU CAN COME HERE UNINVITED?
SINCE YOU STARTED WORKING FOR THE *COLLECTORS,* BROKER. THAT SIMPLE ENOUGH FOR YOU?
SCRUPLES? INTERESTING. I SEE SENDING THE BLUE SUNS AFTER YOU BOTH WAS A WISE PRECAUTION.
YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE A BUSINESSMAN, FERON. YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND WHEN I SAY THEIR OFFER WAS TOO GOOD TO PASS UP.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND! I DON'T UNDERSTAND ANYONE SELLING MY *FRIEND'S REMAINS!*
WHAT COULD THEY HAVE OFFERED YOU THAT WOULD BE WORTH DOING THAT?
LIARA, WAIT!
I KNOW YOU DON'T TRUST ME -- BUT GIVE ME A MINUTE WITH THESE SYSTEMS! THEY HANDLE EVERYTHING!
THE COMPENSATION IS *MY* BUSINESS, *DOCTOR T'SONI* -- BUT IT WAS SIGNIFICANT ENOUGH.
I CAN FIND OUT EVERYTHING THE BROKER ORDERED HERE. WITH THE COLLECTORS -- AND SHEPARD!
YES, I KNOW WHO YOU ARE -- AND WHAT YOU WANT. I HAVE NOTHING PERSONAL AGAINST SHEPARD --

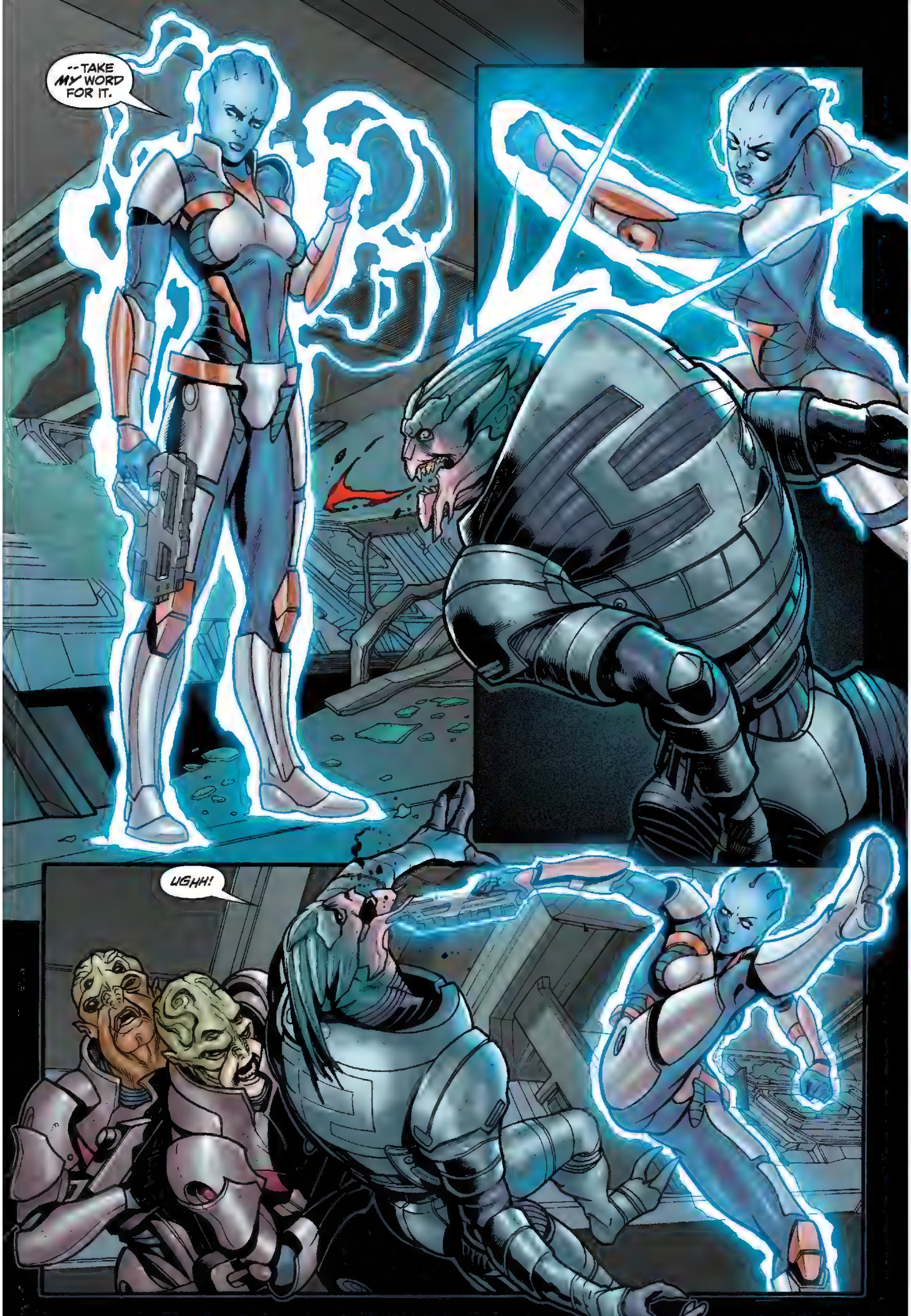

--OR ANY OF SHEPARD'S FRIENDS. IT WAS JUST SOUND BUSINESS.
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DEALING WITH.
SHEPARD DIED LOOKING FOR EVIDENCE OF THE REAPERS-- THE ONES WHO ATTACKED THE CITADEL!
DID YOU EVER CONSIDER THE COLLECTORS' INTEREST MIGHT BE RELATED TO *THAT?*
WHAT WOULD POSSIBLY BE WORTH THAT RISK?
YOU MAKE TOO MUCH OF THIS, LIARA. IT'S A CORPSE. WHAT COULD THEY POSSIBLY GAIN FROM IT?
IF THEY'RE LOOKING FOR A CORPSE, I MIGHT FIND AN ALTERNATIVE FOR THEM--

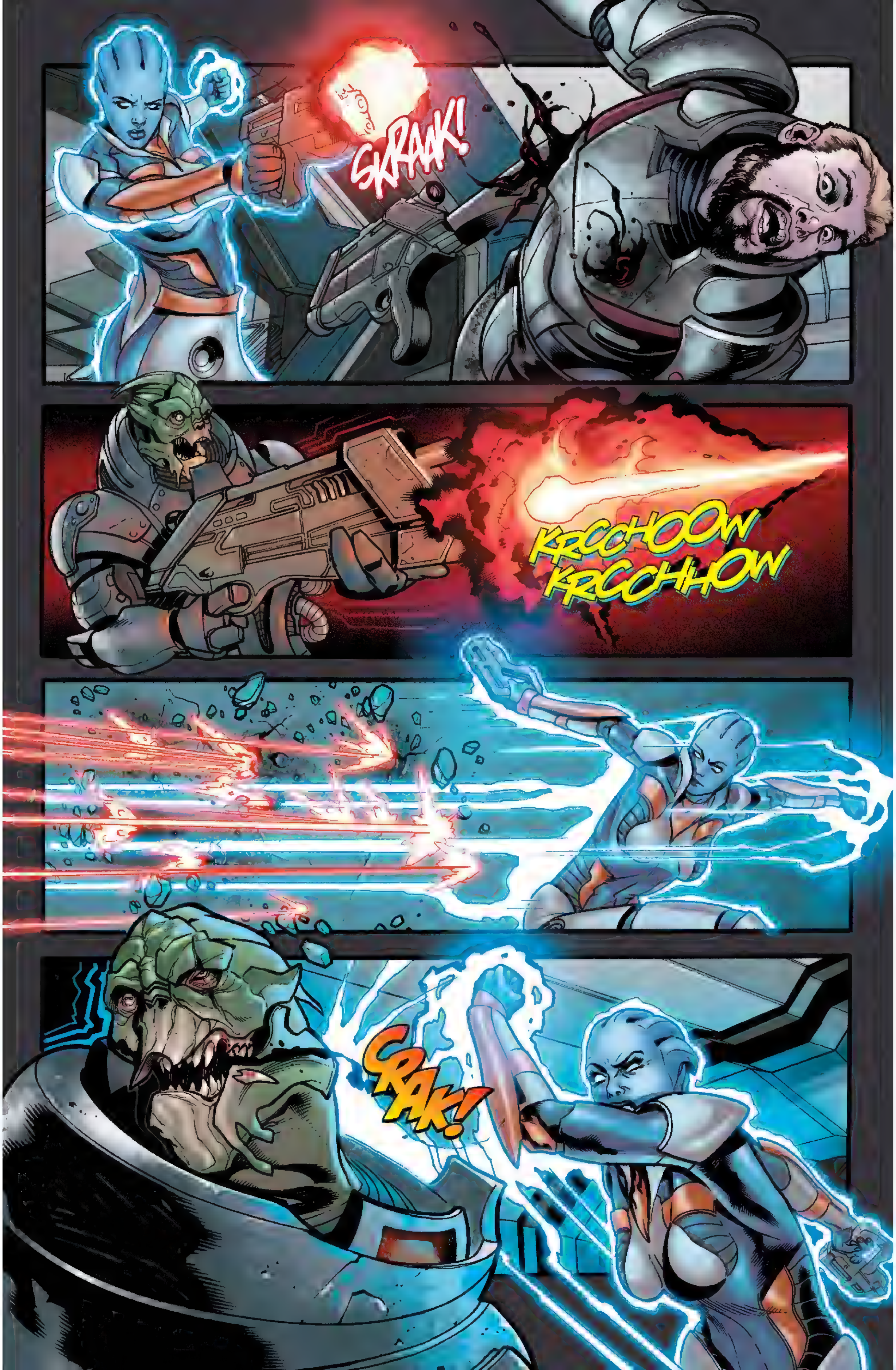

--OR TWO?
YOU'RE NOT HERE. WHERE ARE YOU?
WHERE I NEED TO BE. THE DEAL IS DONE, LIARA. TAZZIK IS ABOUT TO MAKE THE EXCHANGE.
PRODUCT-- FOR PAYMENT. RIGHT NOW, THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO AREN'T WHERE THEY NEED TO BE--
--ARE YOU TWO. THIS ROOM CONNECTS ME TO MY PERMANENT STAFF THERE ON ALINGON. AS SOON AS I GIVE THE WORD, THEY'LL COME.
IF YOU'RE WORKING FOR SOMEONE ELSE, THEY'LL GET IT OUT OF YOU. IT'S NOT MY USUAL WAY TO GAIN INFORMATION--
--BUT IT IS EFFECTIVE...
LIARA, I'VE GOT IT!
LET LOOSE!

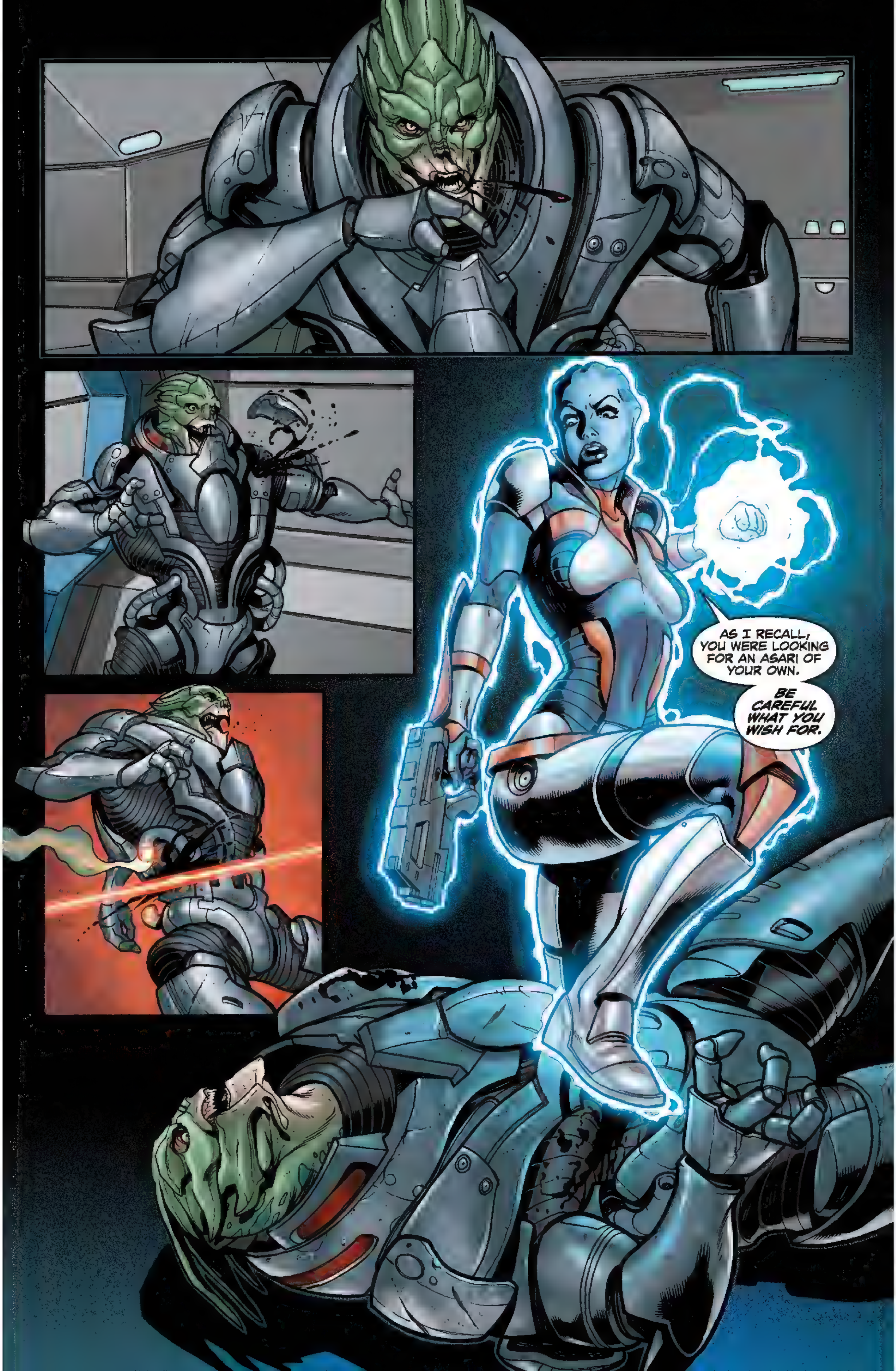

KRRWAAWKWK!
SKRRAKKTT!
KRESSSHH!

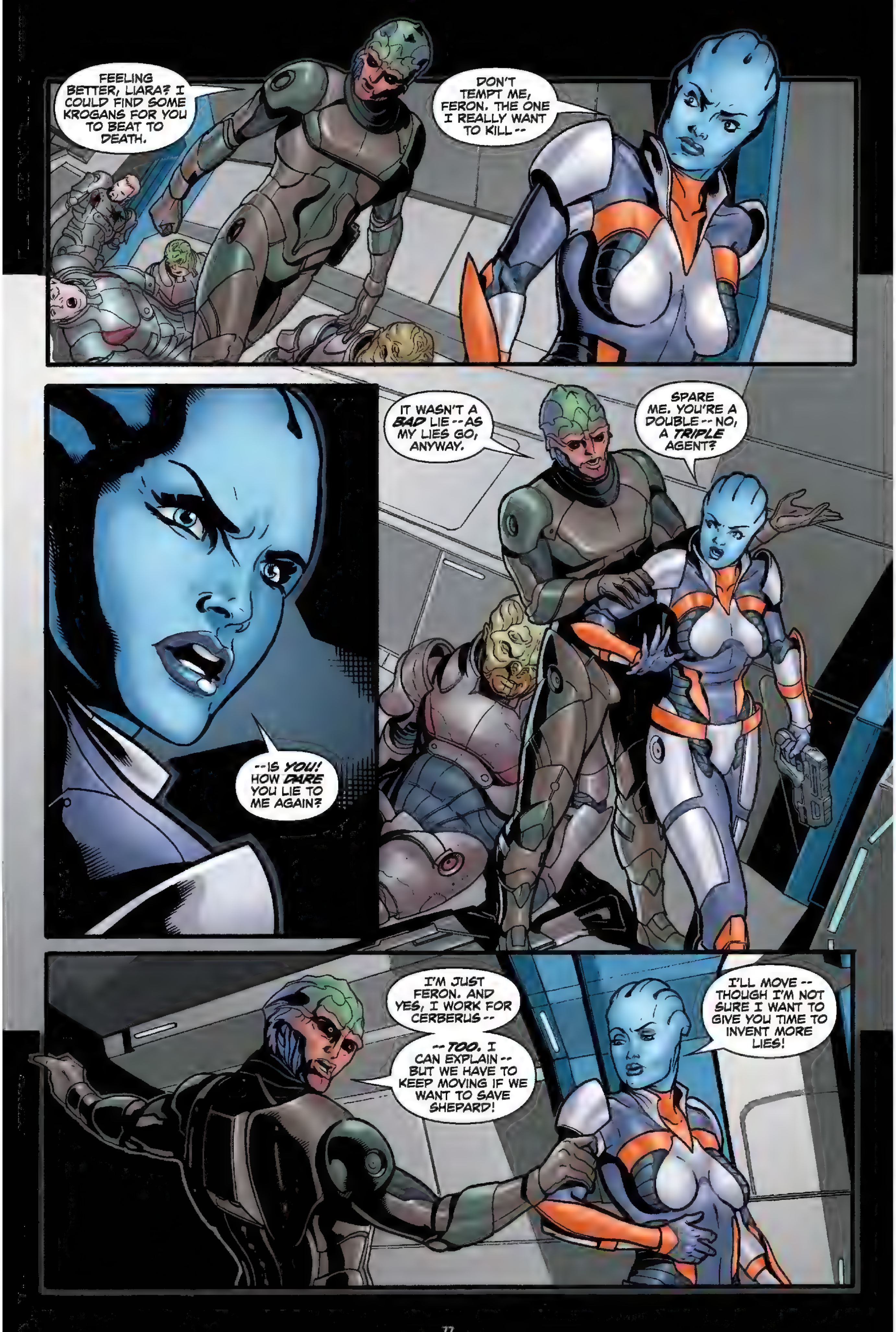

THAT FELT GOOD.
HE WON'T BE ORDERING ANYONE FROM *THIS* ROOM ANYMORE. AND I DOWNLOADED A LOT ABOUT THE BROKER'S DEALINGS!
YES -- BUT WE'VE LOST SHEPARD. THE BROKER SAID IT WAS A DONE DEAL. THE COLLECTORS HAVE THE BODY.
NOT YET. BEFORE THE DISPLAY I WAS LOOKING AT WENT OUT, IT SAID THEY'VE JUST ARRIVED, AT THE NORTH PORTAL.
THEN WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? LET'S GO!
WE WILL. BUT, FIRST, WHILE WE STILL HAVE THE CHANCE --
-- I'D BETTER TELL YOU WHO I'M *REALLY* WORKING FOR...

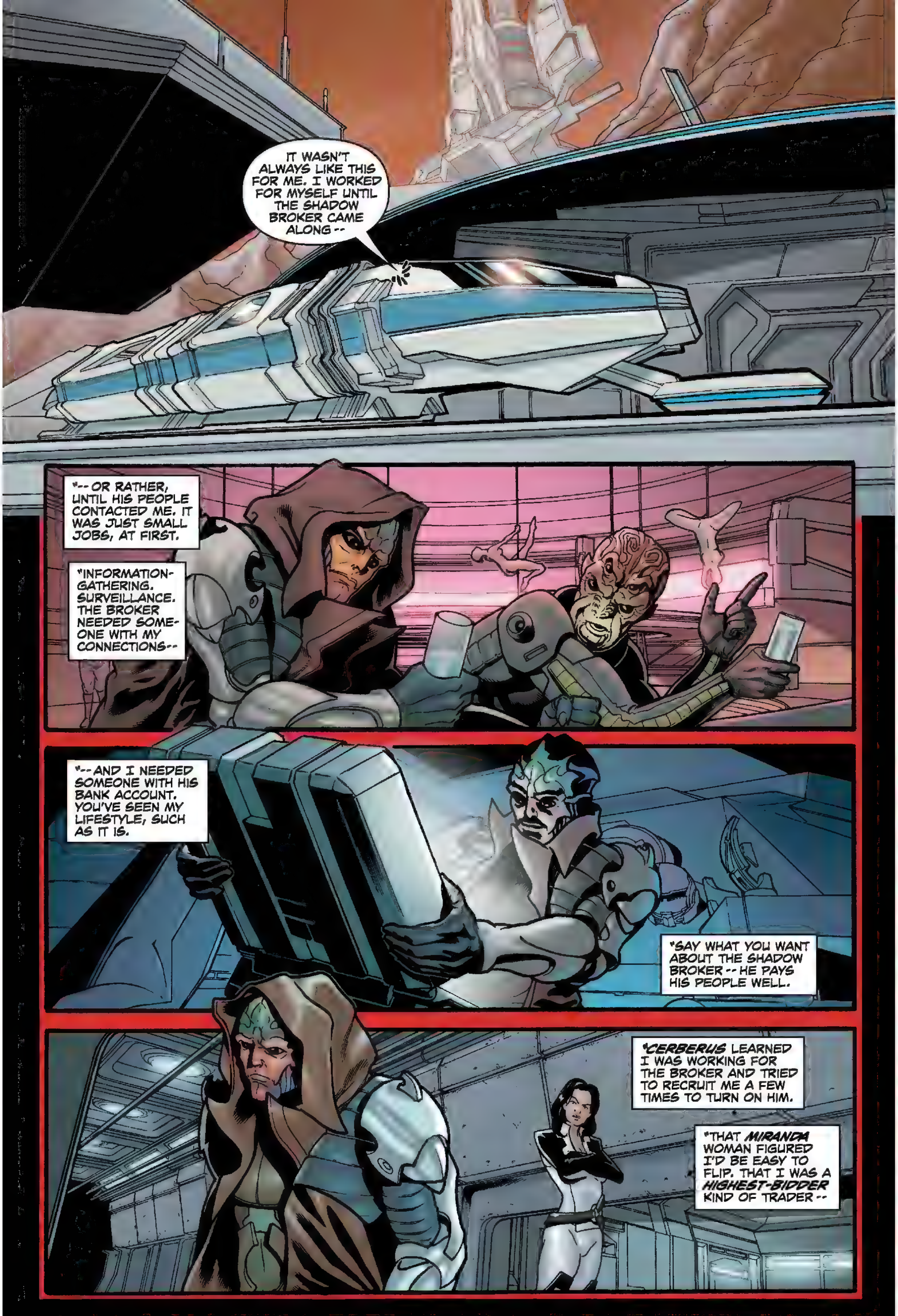

ALINGON.
WHAT'S GOING ON?
I DON'T KNOW! *JUST MOVE!*
ALL I KNOW IS THE SHADOW BROKER'S COMMAND CHANNEL'S THROWING NOTHING BUT STATIC!
THERE'S SOMETHING BIG GOIN' DOWN TODAY -- I'M NOT GONNA BE BLAMED FOR ANYTHING SCREWING IT UP!
BUT NOBODY'S ALLOWED TO TALK TO ANYBODY ELSE AROUND HERE! HOW DO WE KNOW THIS ISN'T ANOTHER DAMN DRILL?
IT'S REAL--

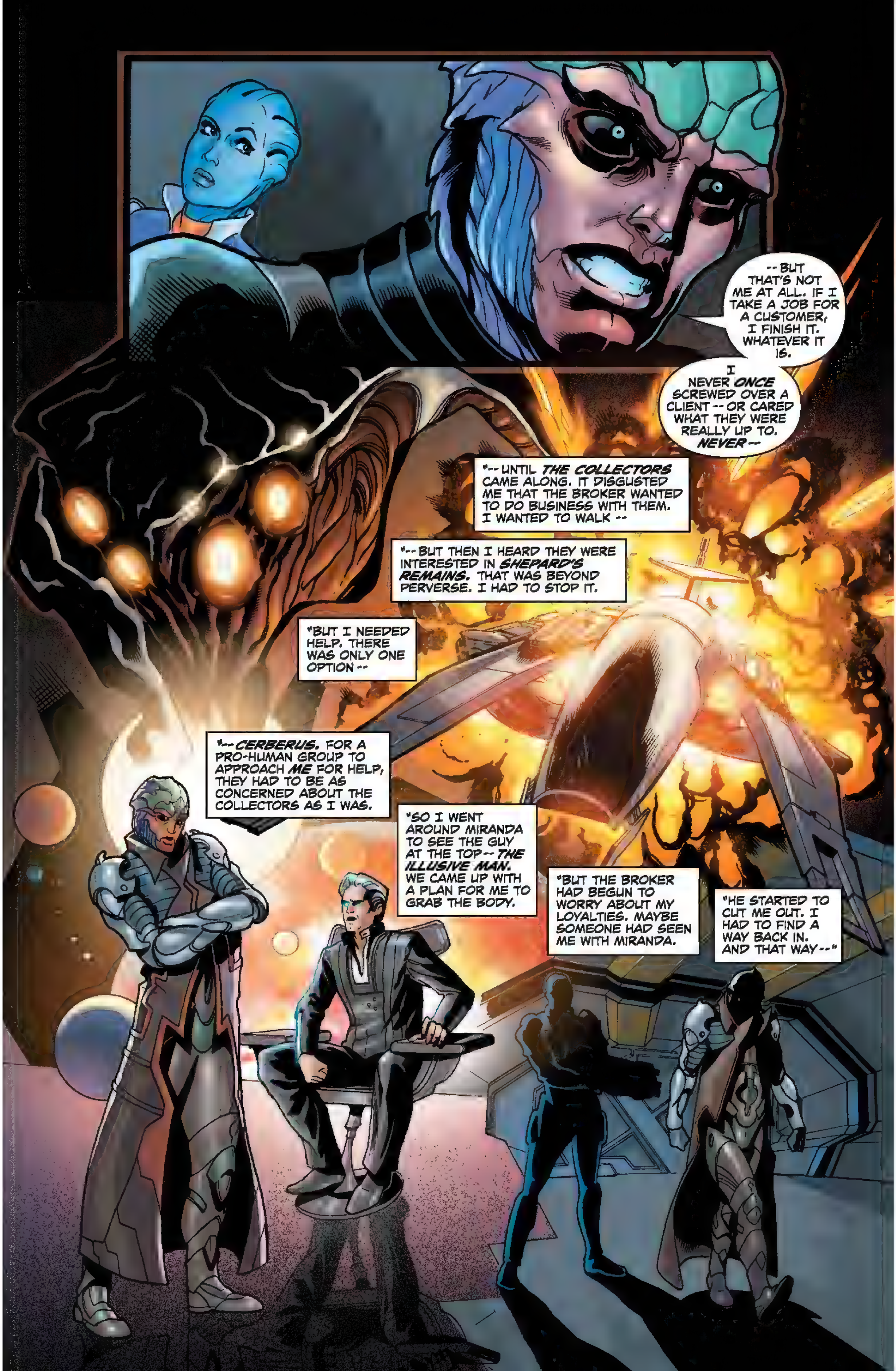

--TAKE *MY* WORD FOR IT.
UGHH!

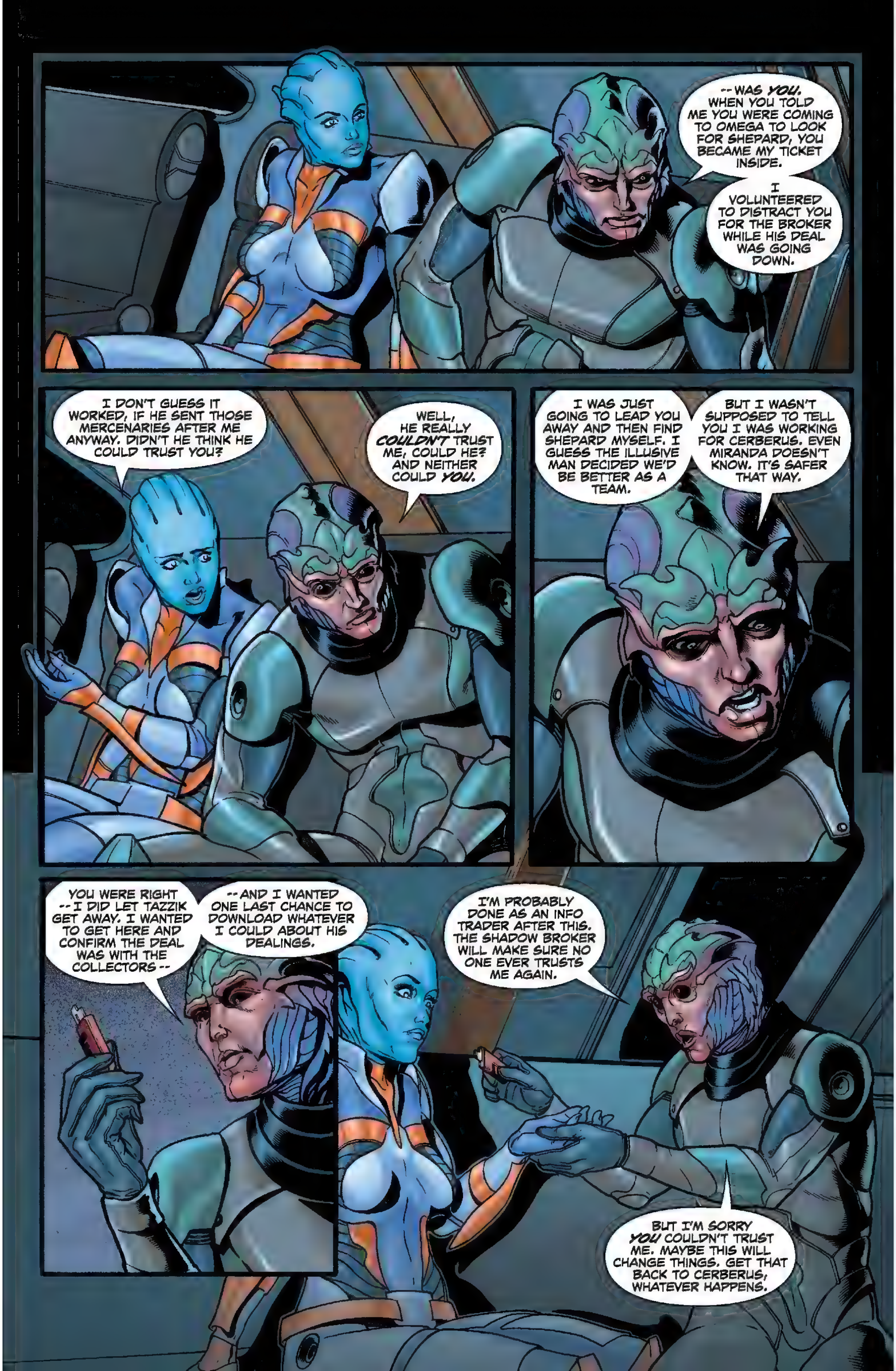

SKRAAK!
KRCCHOOW
KRCCHHOW
CRAK!

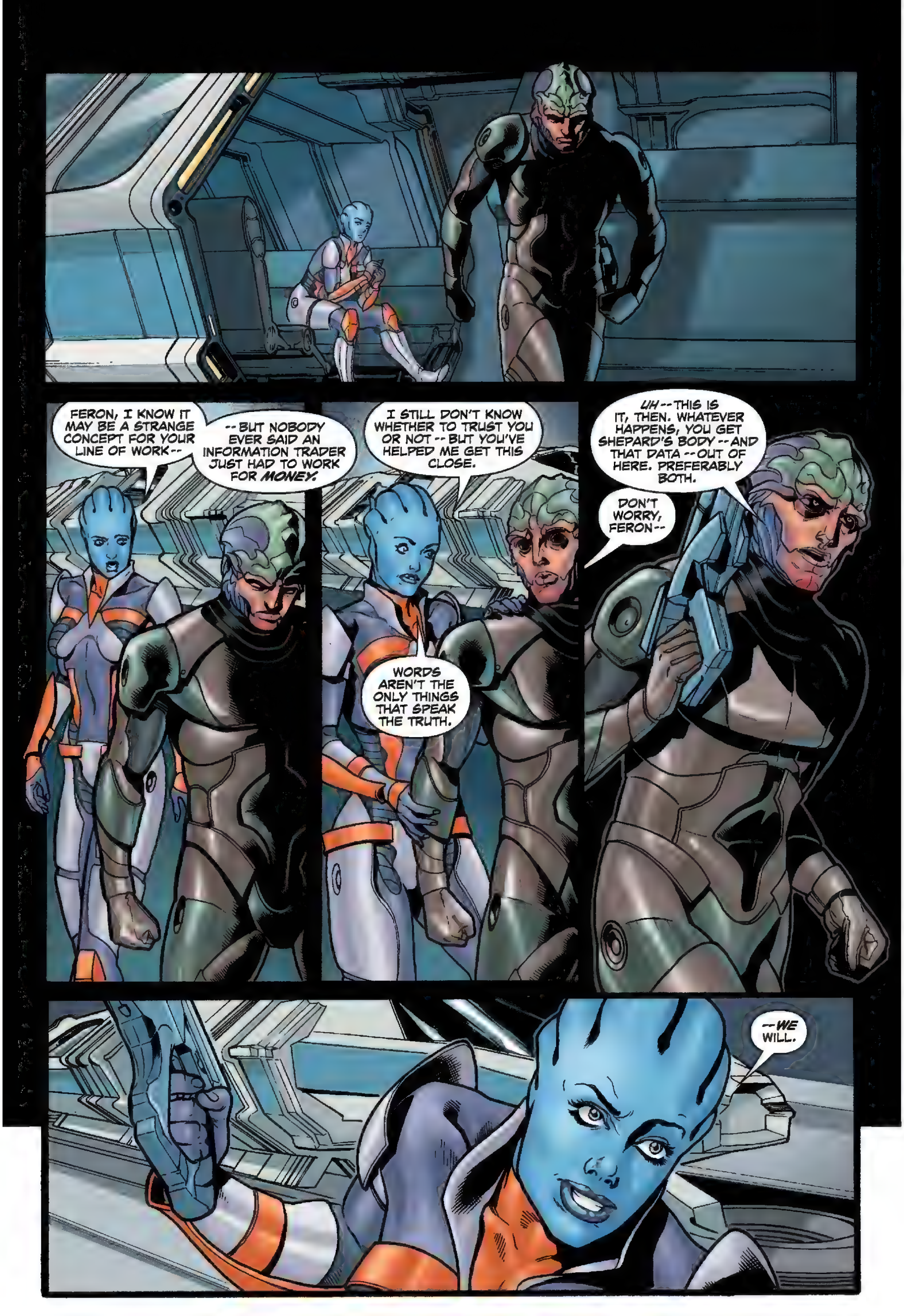

AS I RECALL, YOU WERE LOOKING FOR AN ASARI OF YOUR OWN.
BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR.

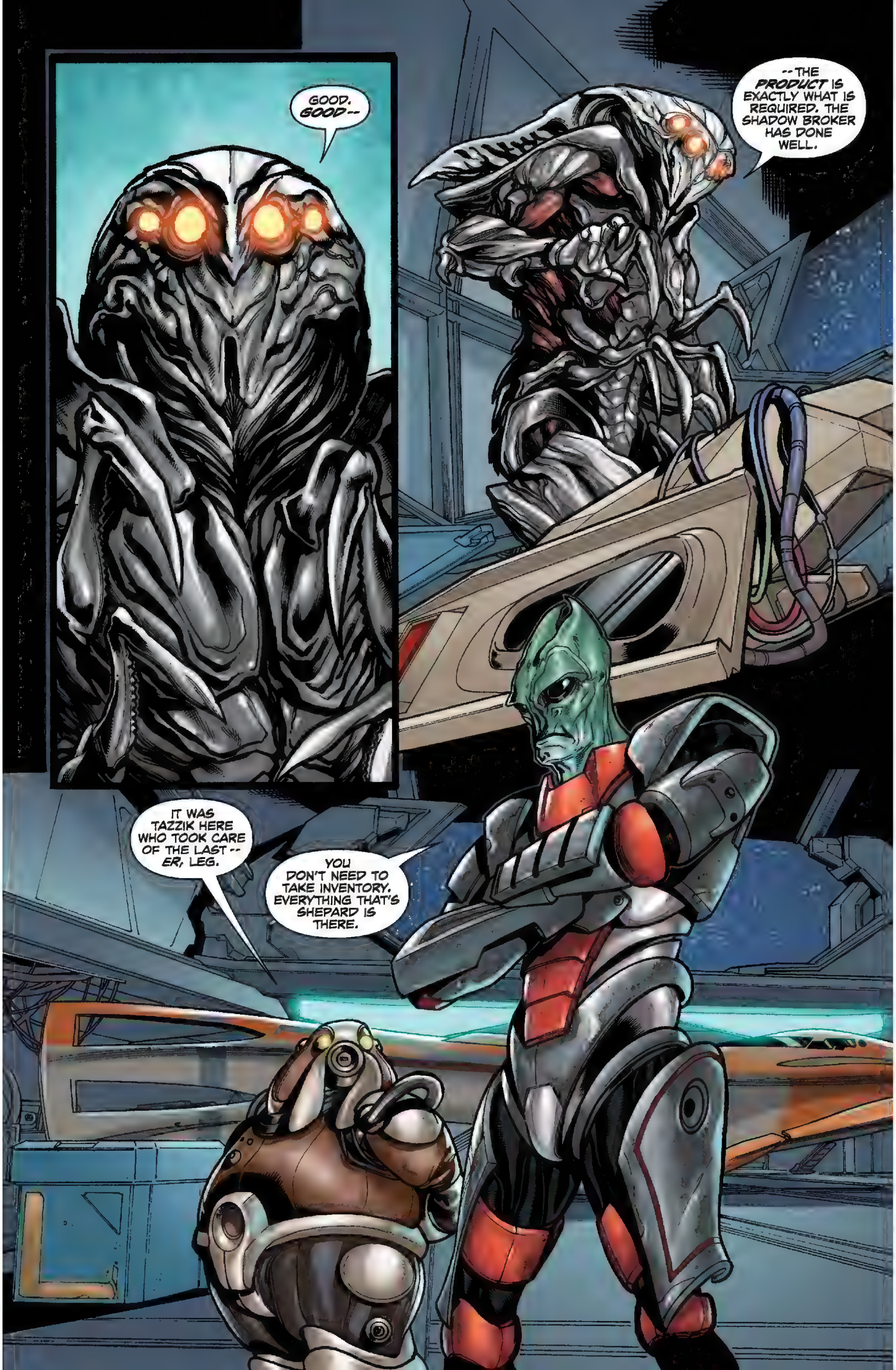

FEELING BETTER, LIARA? I COULD FIND SOME KROGANS FOR YOU TO BEAT TO DEATH.
DON'T TEMPT ME, FERON. THE ONE I REALLY WANT TO KILL --
--IS *YOU!* HOW *DARE* YOU LIE TO ME AGAIN?
IT WASN'T A *BAD* LIE -- AS MY LIES GO, ANYWAY.
SPARE ME. YOU'RE A DOUBLE -- NO, A *TRIPLE* AGENT?
I'M JUST FERON. AND YES, I WORK FOR CERBERUS --
-- *TOO.* I CAN EXPLAIN -- BUT WE HAVE TO KEEP MOVING IF WE WANT TO SAVE SHEPARD!
I'LL MOVE -- THOUGH I'M NOT SURE I WANT TO GIVE YOU TIME TO INVENT MORE LIES!

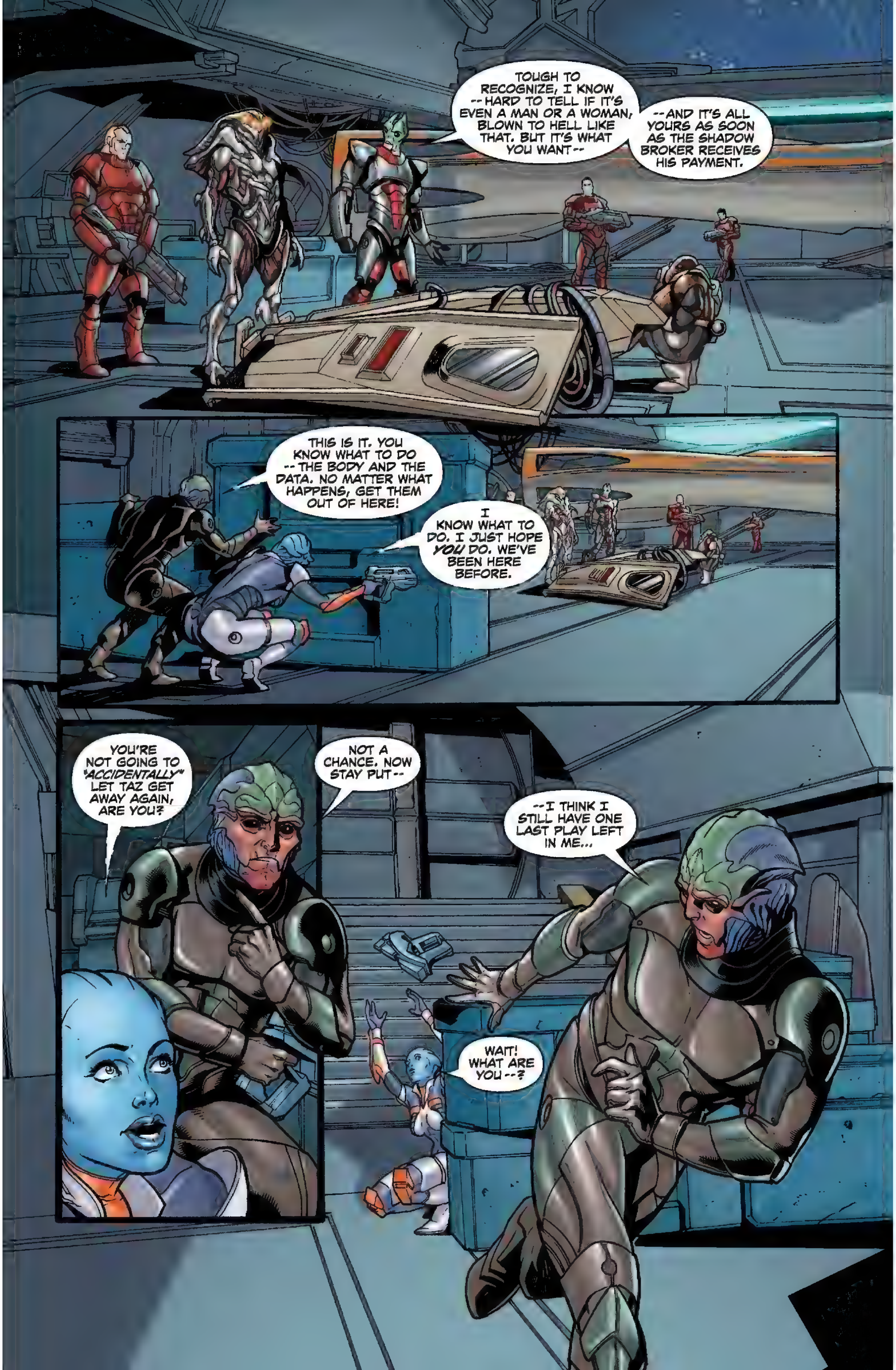

IT WASN'T ALWAYS LIKE THIS FOR ME. I WORKED FOR MYSELF UNTIL THE SHADOW BROKER CAME ALONG --
"-- OR RATHER, UNTIL HIS PEOPLE CONTACTED ME. IT WAS JUST SMALL JOBS, AT FIRST.
"INFORMATION-GATHERING. SURVEILLANCE. THE BROKER NEEDED SOMEONE WITH MY CONNECTIONS--
"--AND I NEEDED SOMEONE WITH HIS BANK ACCOUNT. YOU'VE SEEN MY LIFESTYLE, SUCH AS IT IS.
"SAY WHAT YOU WANT ABOUT THE SHADOW BROKER -- HE PAYS HIS PEOPLE WELL.
"*CERBERUS* LEARNED I WAS WORKING FOR THE BROKER AND TRIED TO RECRUIT ME A FEW TIMES TO TURN ON HIM.
"THAT *MIRANDA* WOMAN FIGURED I'D BE EASY TO FLIP. THAT I WAS A *HIGHEST-BIDDER* KIND OF TRADER --

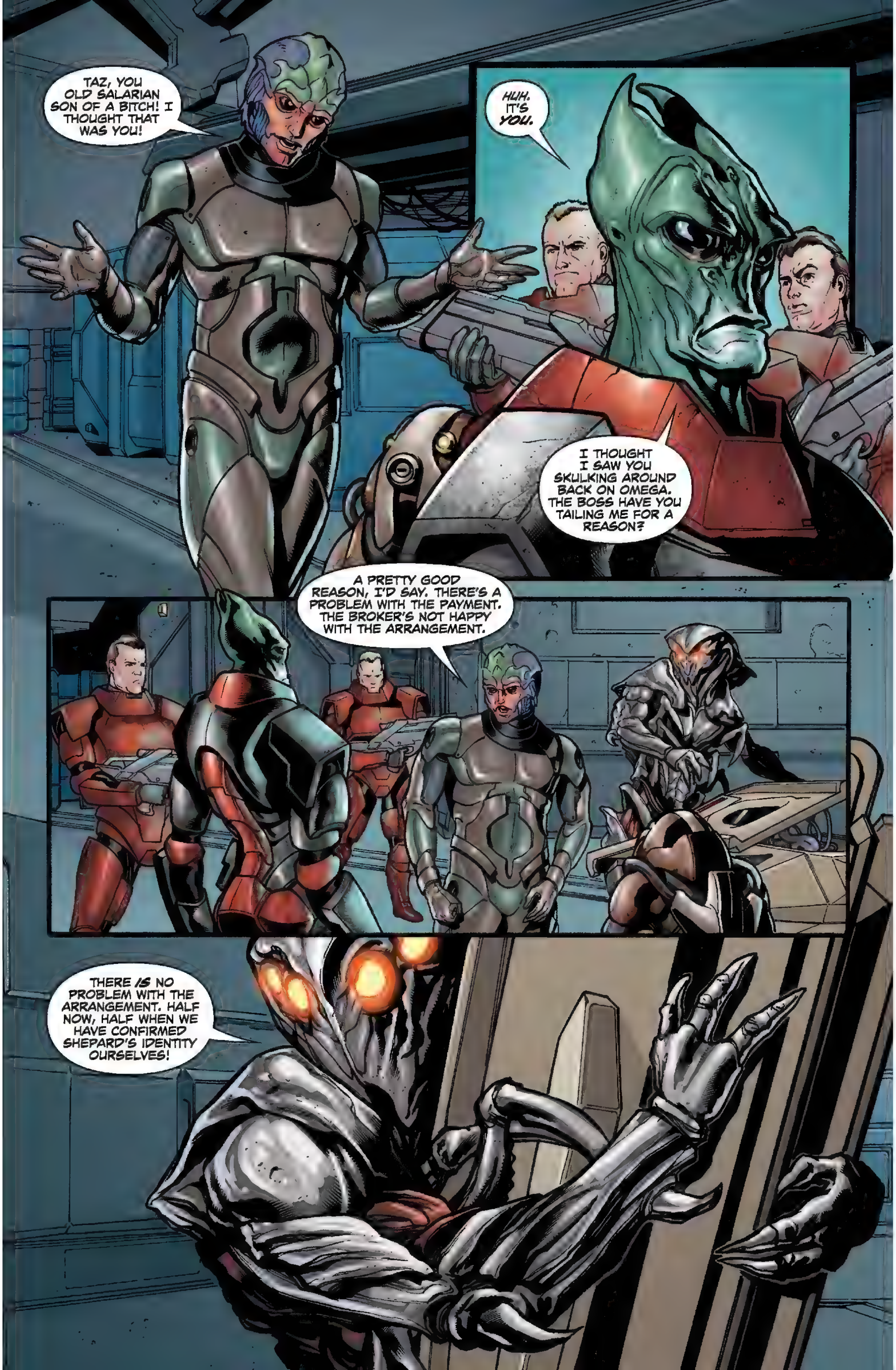

--BUT THAT'S NOT ME AT ALL. IF I TAKE A JOB FOR A CUSTOMER, I FINISH IT. WHATEVER IT IS.
I NEVER *ONCE* SCREWED OVER A CLIENT -- OR CARED WHAT THEY WERE REALLY UP TO. *NEVER* --
"-- UNTIL ***THE COLLECTORS*** CAME ALONG. IT DISGUSTED ME THAT THE BROKER WANTED TO DO BUSINESS WITH THEM. I WANTED TO WALK --
"-- BUT THEN I HEARD THEY WERE INTERESTED IN ***SHEPARD'S REMAINS.*** THAT WAS BEYOND PERVERSE. I HAD TO STOP IT.
"BUT I NEEDED HELP. THERE WAS ONLY ONE OPTION --
"-- ***CERBERUS.*** FOR A PRO-HUMAN GROUP TO APPROACH ***ME*** FOR HELP, THEY HAD TO BE AS CONCERNED ABOUT THE COLLECTORS AS I WAS.
"SO I WENT AROUND MIRANDA TO SEE THE GUY AT THE TOP -- ***THE ILLUSIVE MAN.*** WE CAME UP WITH A PLAN FOR ME TO GRAB THE BODY.
"BUT THE BROKER HAD BEGUN TO WORRY ABOUT MY LOYALTIES. MAYBE SOMEONE HAD SEEN ME WITH MIRANDA.
"HE STARTED TO CUT ME OUT. I HAD TO FIND A WAY BACK IN. AND THAT WAY --"

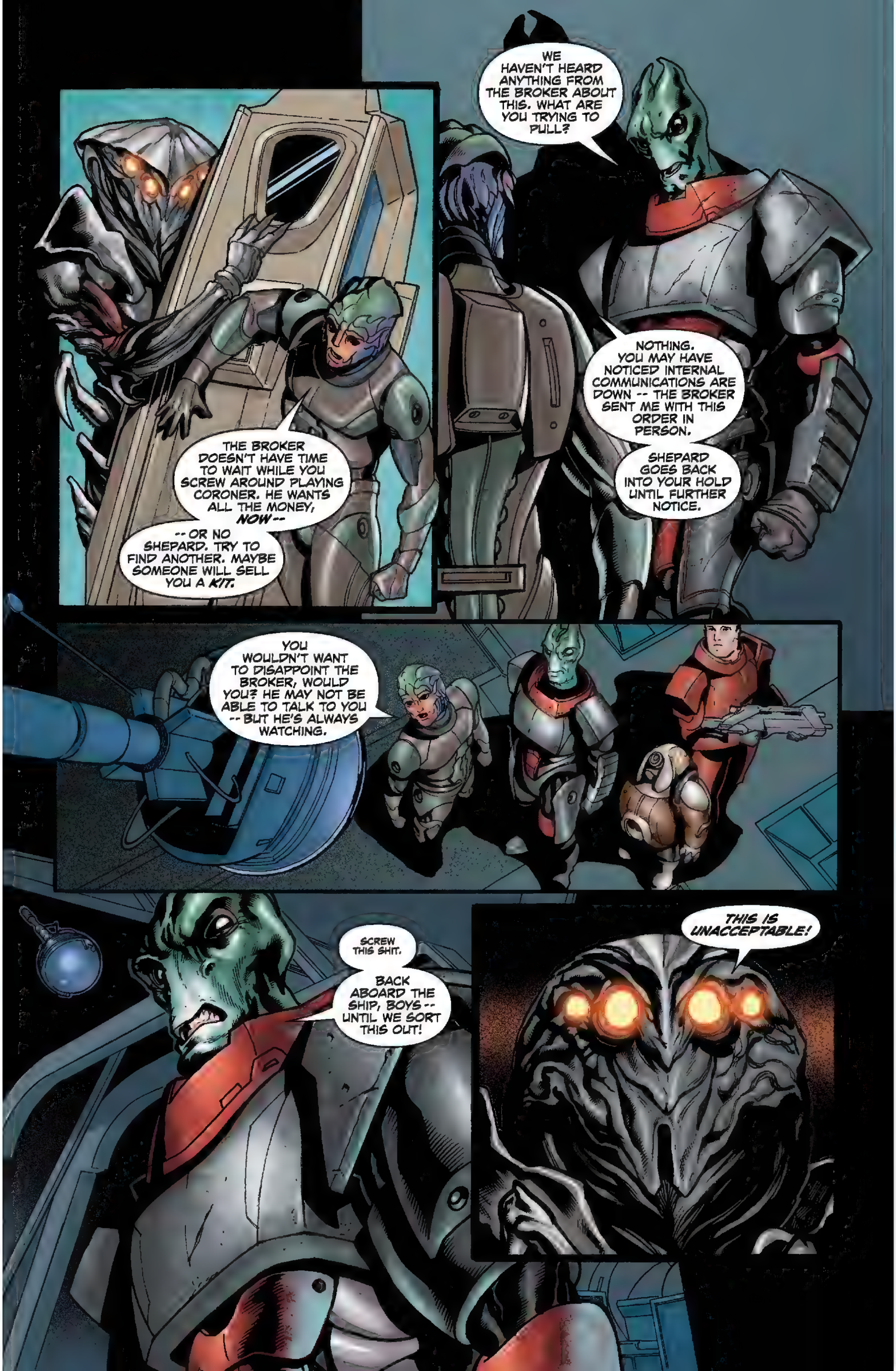

--WAS *YOU.* WHEN YOU TOLD ME YOU WERE COMING TO OMEGA TO LOOK FOR SHEPARD, YOU BECAME MY TICKET INSIDE.
I VOLUNTEERED TO DISTRACT YOU FOR THE BROKER WHILE HIS DEAL WAS GOING DOWN.
I DON'T GUESS IT WORKED, IF HE SENT THOSE MERCENARIES AFTER ME ANYWAY. DIDN'T HE THINK HE COULD TRUST YOU?
WELL, HE REALLY *COULDN'T* TRUST ME, COULD HE? AND NEITHER COULD *YOU.*
I WAS JUST GOING TO LEAD YOU AWAY AND THEN FIND SHEPARD MYSELF. I GUESS THE ILLUSIVE MAN DECIDED WE'D BE BETTER AS A TEAM.
BUT I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO TELL YOU I WAS WORKING FOR CERBERUS. EVEN MIRANDA DOESN'T KNOW. IT'S SAFER THAT WAY.
YOU WERE RIGHT --I DID LET TAZZIK GET AWAY. I WANTED TO GET HERE AND CONFIRM THE DEAL WAS WITH THE COLLECTORS--
--AND I WANTED ONE LAST CHANCE TO DOWNLOAD WHATEVER I COULD ABOUT HIS DEALINGS.
I'M PROBABLY DONE AS AN INFO TRADER AFTER THIS. THE SHADOW BROKER WILL MAKE SURE NO ONE EVER TRUSTS ME AGAIN.
BUT I'M SORRY *YOU* COULDN'T TRUST ME. MAYBE THIS WILL CHANGE THINGS. GET THAT BACK TO CERBERUS, WHATEVER HAPPENS.

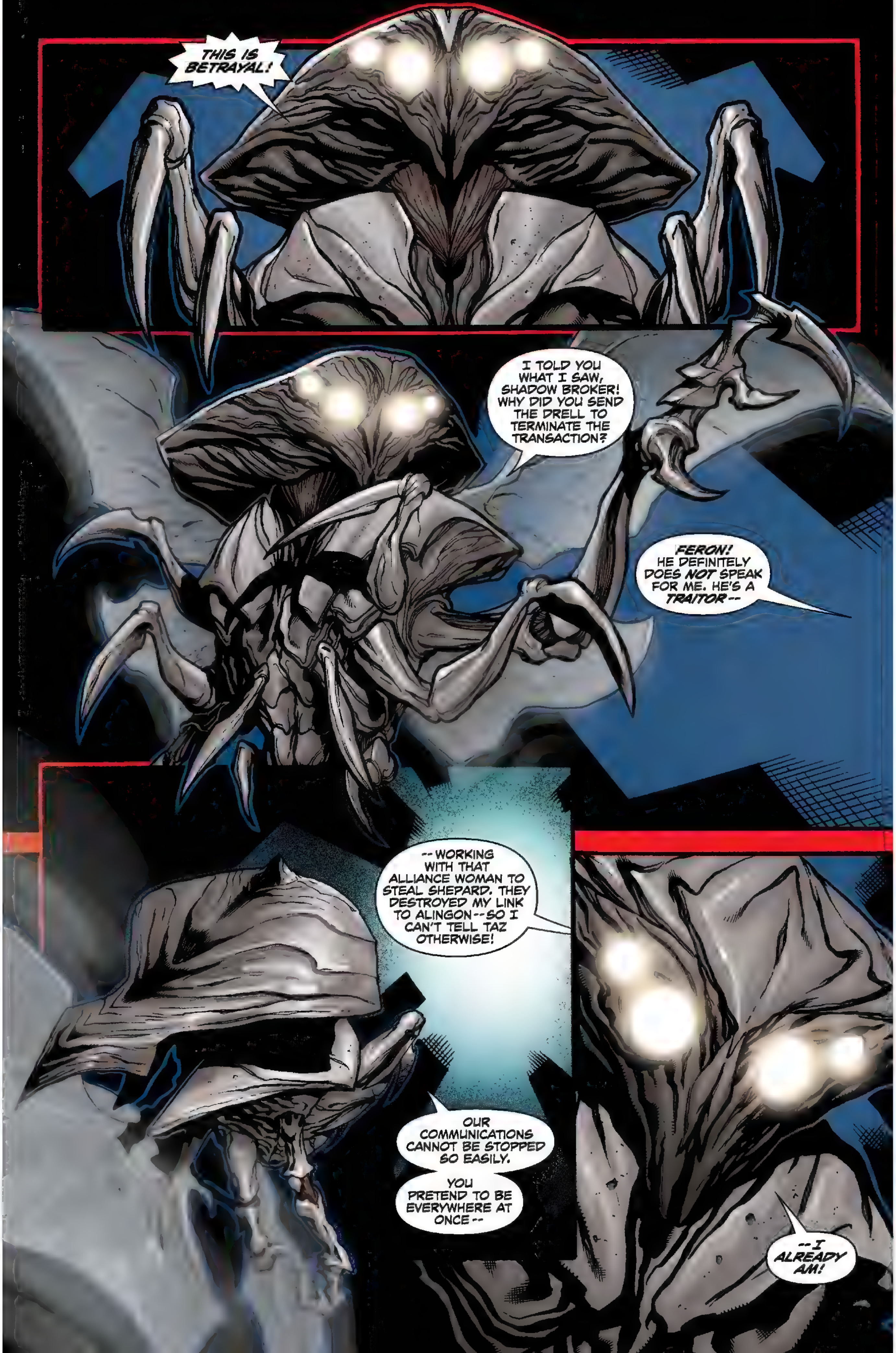

FERON, I KNOW IT MAY BE A STRANGE CONCEPT FOR YOUR LINE OF WORK--
--BUT NOBODY EVER SAID AN INFORMATION TRADER JUST HAD TO WORK FOR *MONEY.*
I STILL DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO TRUST YOU OR NOT--BUT YOU'VE HELPED ME GET THIS CLOSE.
WORDS AREN'T THE ONLY THINGS THAT SPEAK THE TRUTH.
UH--THIS IS IT, THEN. WHATEVER HAPPENS, YOU GET SHEPARD'S BODY--AND THAT DATA--OUT OF HERE. PREFERABLY BOTH.
DON'T WORRY, FERON--
--*WE* WILL.

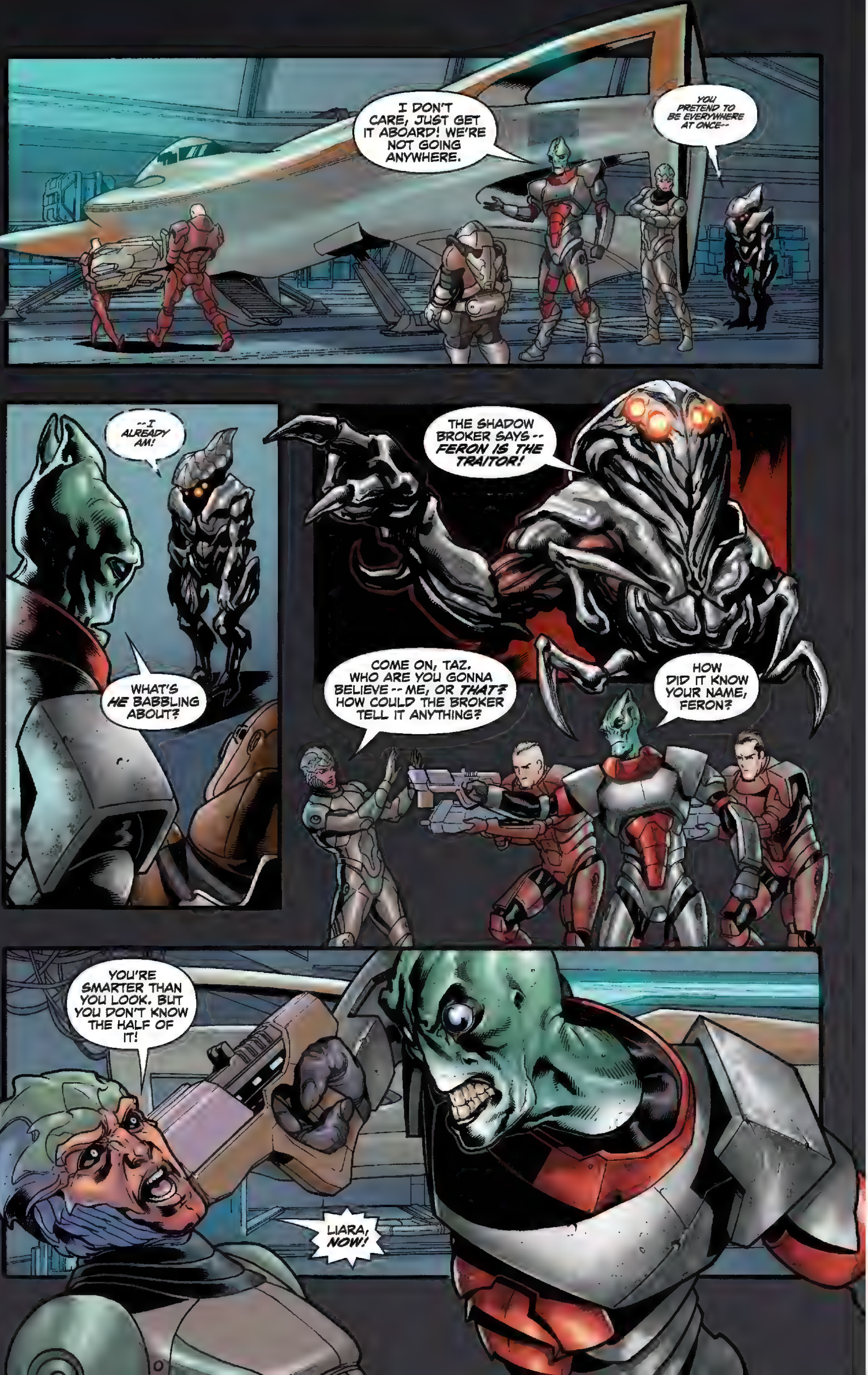

GOOD. *GOOD--*
--THE *PRODUCT* IS EXACTLY WHAT IS REQUIRED. THE SHADOW BROKER HAS DONE WELL.
IT WAS TAZZIK HERE WHO TOOK CARE OF THE LAST-- *ER,* LEG.
YOU DON'T NEED TO TAKE INVENTORY. EVERYTHING THAT'S SHEPARD IS THERE.

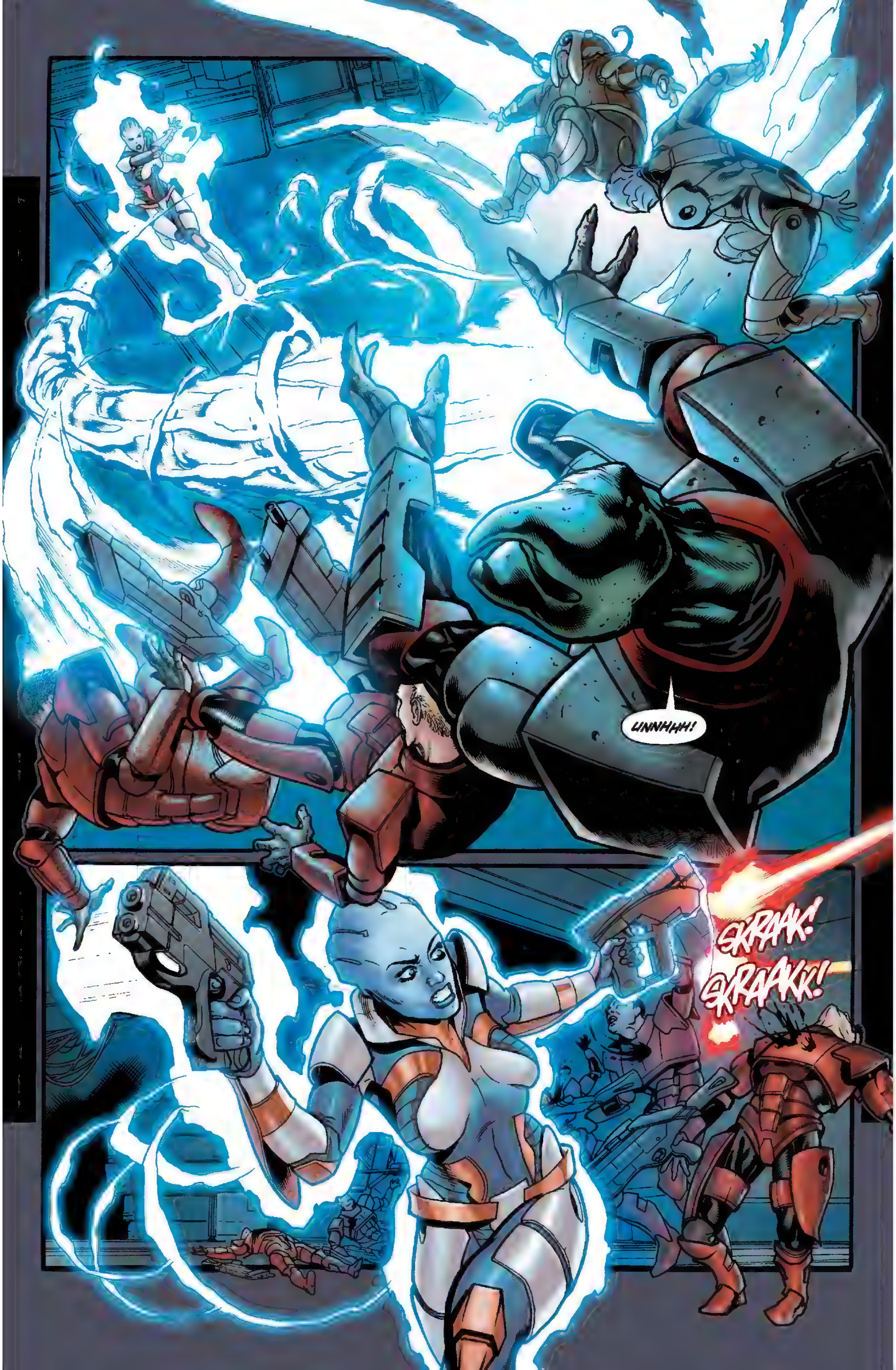

TOUGH TO RECOGNIZE, I KNOW -- HARD TO TELL IF IT'S EVEN A MAN OR A WOMAN, BLOWN TO HELL LIKE THAT. BUT IT'S WHAT YOU WANT--
--AND IT'S ALL YOURS AS SOON AS THE SHADOW BROKER RECEIVES HIS PAYMENT.
THIS IS IT. YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO -- THE BODY AND THE DATA. NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, GET THEM OUT OF HERE!
I KNOW WHAT TO DO. I JUST HOPE *YOU* DO. WE'VE BEEN HERE BEFORE.
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO *"ACCIDENTALLY"* LET TAZ GET AWAY AGAIN, ARE YOU?
NOT A CHANCE. NOW STAY PUT--
--I THINK I STILL HAVE ONE LAST PLAY LEFT IN ME...
WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU--?

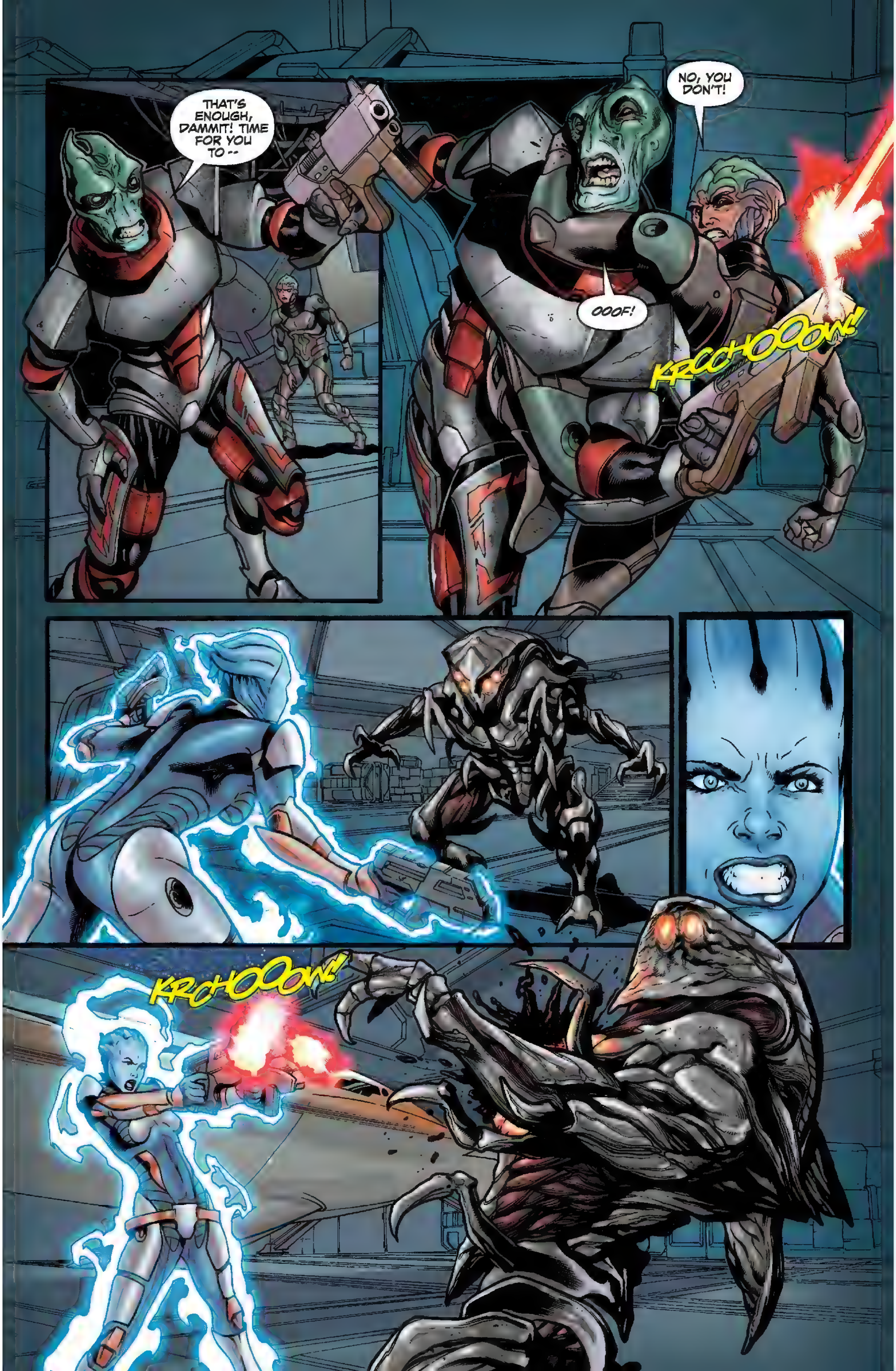

TAZ, YOU OLD SALARIAN SON OF A BITCH! I THOUGHT THAT WAS YOU!
HUH. IT'S *YOU.*
I THOUGHT I SAW YOU SKULKING AROUND BACK ON OMEGA. THE BOSS HAVE YOU TAILING ME FOR A REASON?
A PRETTY GOOD REASON, I'D SAY. THERE'S A PROBLEM WITH THE PAYMENT. THE BROKER'S NOT HAPPY WITH THE ARRANGEMENT.
THERE *IS* NO PROBLEM WITH THE ARRANGEMENT. HALF NOW, HALF WHEN WE HAVE CONFIRMED SHEPARD'S IDENTITY OURSELVES!

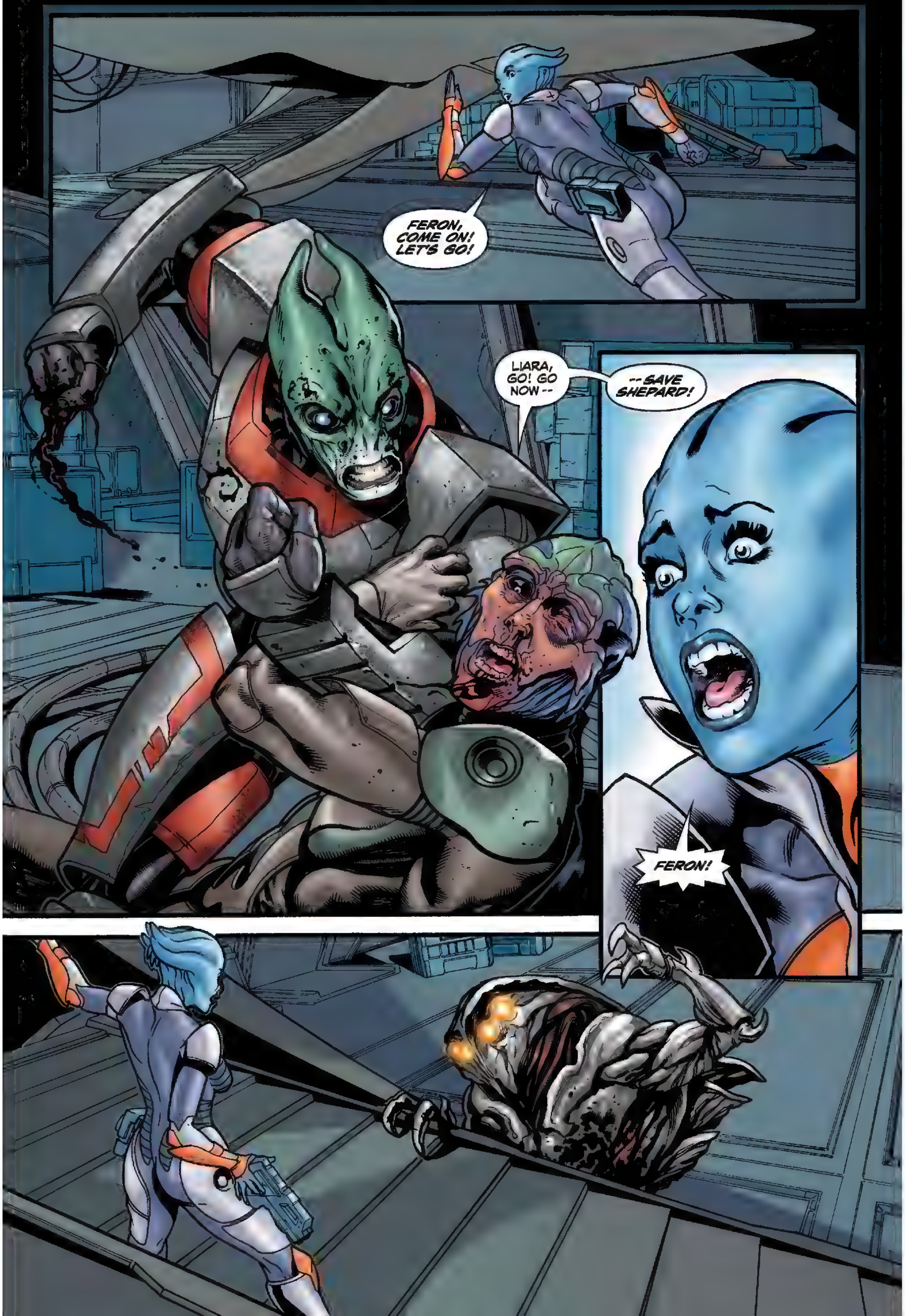

WE HAVEN'T HEARD ANYTHING FROM THE BROKER ABOUT THIS. WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO PULL?
NOTHING. YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS ARE DOWN -- THE BROKER SENT ME WITH THIS ORDER IN PERSON.
SHEPARD GOES BACK INTO YOUR HOLD UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.
THE BROKER DOESN'T HAVE TIME TO WAIT WHILE YOU SCREW AROUND PLAYING CORONER. HE WANTS ALL THE MONEY, *NOW* --
-- OR NO SHEPARD. TRY TO FIND ANOTHER. MAYBE SOMEONE WILL SELL YOU A *KIT.*
YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO DISAPPOINT THE BROKER, WOULD YOU? HE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO TALK TO YOU -- BUT HE'S ALWAYS WATCHING.
SCREW THIS SHIT.
BACK ABOARD THE SHIP, BOYS -- UNTIL WE SORT THIS OUT!
THIS IS UNACCEPTABLE!

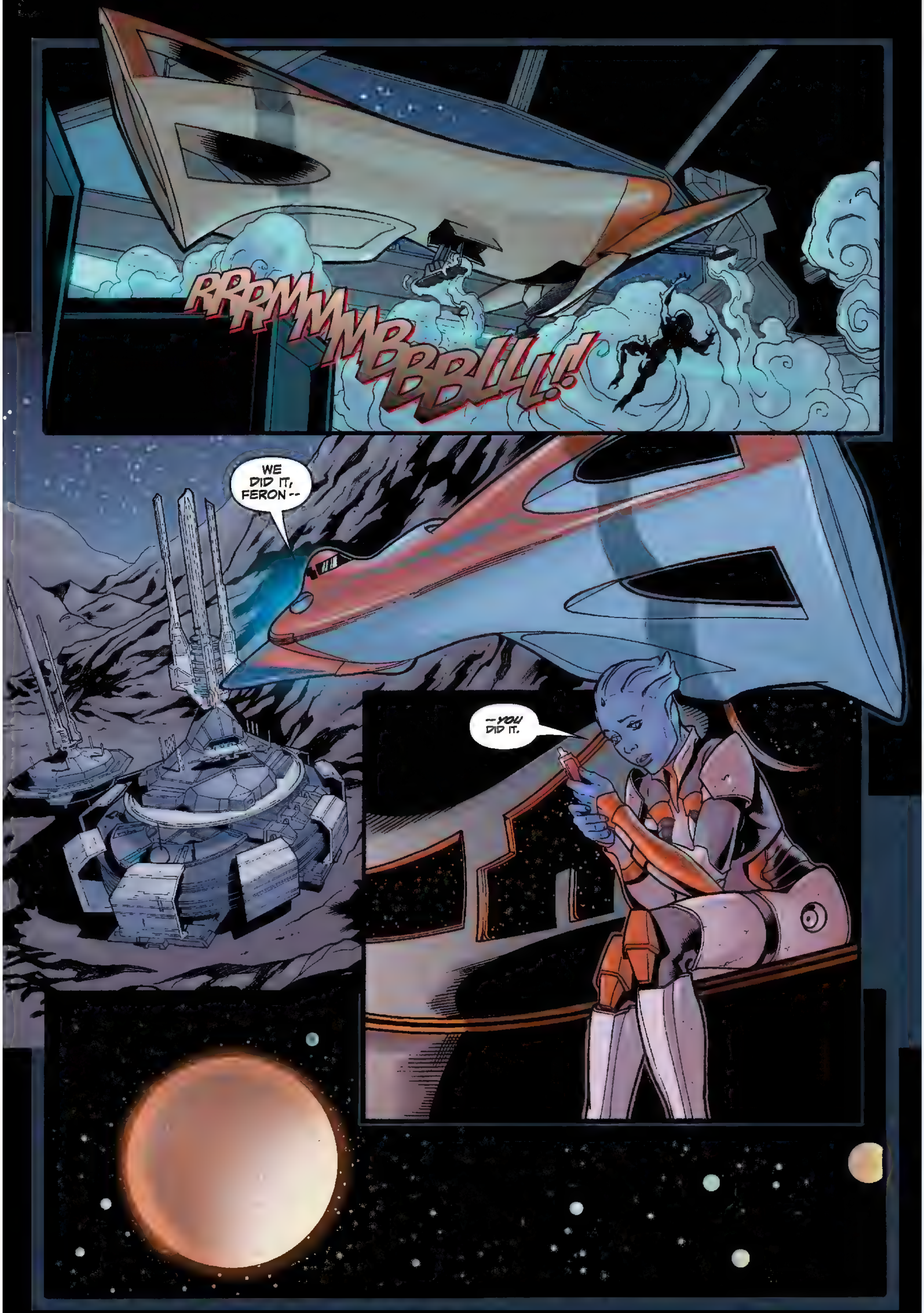

THIS IS BETRAYAL!
I TOLD YOU WHAT I SAW, SHADOW BROKER! WHY DID YOU SEND THE DRELL TO TERMINATE THE TRANSACTION?
FERON! HE DEFINITELY DOES NOT SPEAK FOR ME. HE'S A TRAITOR--
--WORKING WITH THAT ALLIANCE WOMAN TO STEAL SHEPARD. THEY DESTROYED MY LINK TO ALINGON--SO I CAN'T TELL TAZ OTHERWISE!
OUR COMMUNICATIONS CANNOT BE STOPPED SO EASILY.
YOU PRETEND TO BE EVERYWHERE AT ONCE--
--I ALREADY AM!

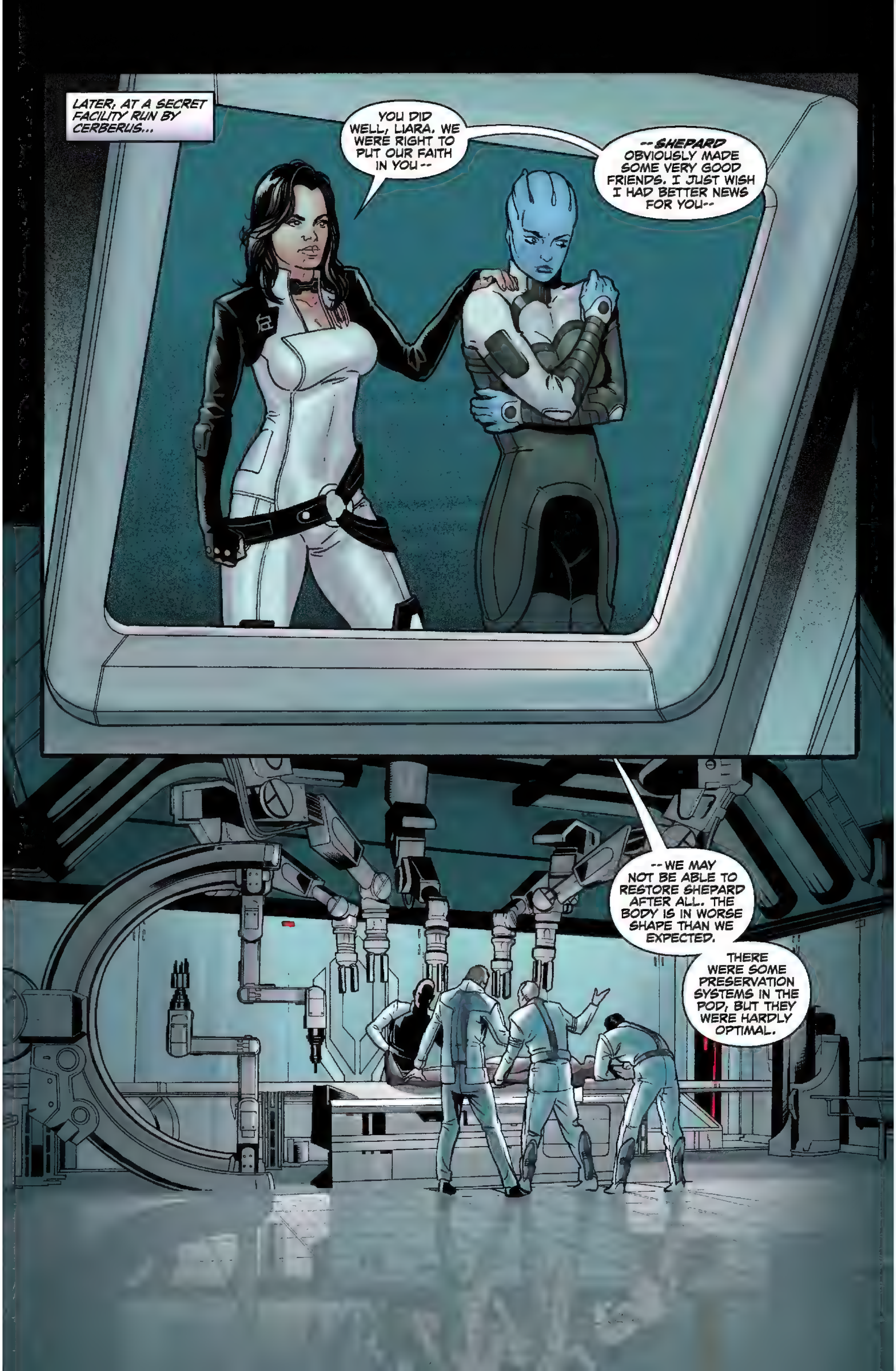

I DON'T CARE, JUST GET IT ABOARD! WE'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
YOU PRETEND TO BE EVERYWHERE AT ONCE--
--I ALREADY AM!
WHAT'S *HE* BABBLING ABOUT?
THE SHADOW BROKER SAYS-- *FERON IS THE TRAITOR!*
COME ON, TAZ. WHO ARE YOU GONNA BELIEVE -- ME, OR *THAT?* HOW COULD THE BROKER TELL IT ANYTHING?
HOW DID IT KNOW YOUR NAME, FERON?
YOU'RE SMARTER THAN YOU LOOK. BUT YOU DON'T KNOW THE HALF OF IT!
LIARA, *NOW!*

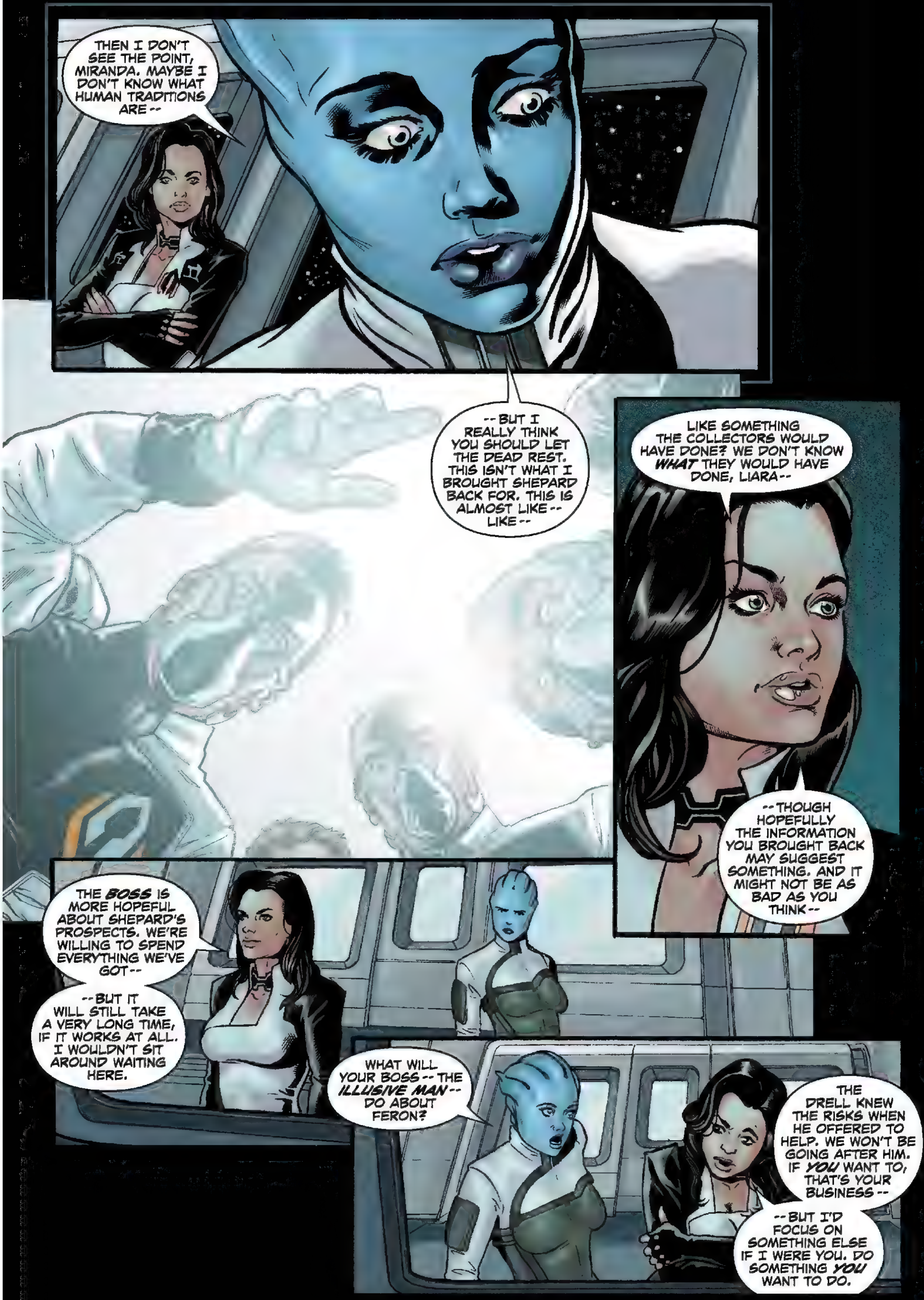

UNNHHH!
SKRAAK!
SKRAAKK!


THAT'S ENOUGH, DAMMIT! TIME FOR YOU TO --
NO, YOU DON'T!
OOOF!
KRCCHOOOOW!
KRCHOOOW!


FERON, COME ON! LET'S GO!
LIARA, GO! GO NOW --
-- SAVE SHEPARD!
FERON!


RRRMMMBBBLLLL!!
WE DID IT, FERON--
--YOU DID IT.


LATER, AT A SECRET FACILITY RUN BY CERBERUS...
YOU DID WELL, LIARA. WE WERE RIGHT TO PUT OUR FAITH IN YOU --
-- SHEPARD OBVIOUSLY MADE SOME VERY GOOD FRIENDS. I JUST WISH I HAD BETTER NEWS FOR YOU--
--WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO RESTORE SHEPARD AFTER ALL. THE BODY IS IN WORSE SHAPE THAN WE EXPECTED.
THERE WERE SOME PRESERVATION SYSTEMS IN THE POD, BUT THEY WERE HARDLY OPTIMAL.


THEN I DON'T SEE THE POINT, MIRANDA. MAYBE I DON'T KNOW WHAT HUMAN TRADITIONS ARE --
-- BUT I REALLY THINK YOU SHOULD LET THE DEAD REST. THIS ISN'T WHAT I BROUGHT SHEPARD BACK FOR. THIS IS ALMOST LIKE -- LIKE --
LIKE SOMETHING THE COLLECTORS WOULD HAVE DONE? WE DON'T KNOW *WHAT* THEY WOULD HAVE DONE, LIARA --
-- THOUGH HOPEFULLY THE INFORMATION YOU BROUGHT BACK MAY SUGGEST SOMETHING. AND IT MIGHT NOT BE AS BAD AS YOU THINK --
THE *BOSS* IS MORE HOPEFUL ABOUT SHEPARD'S PROSPECTS. WE'RE WILLING TO SPEND EVERYTHING WE'VE GOT --
-- BUT IT WILL STILL TAKE A VERY LONG TIME, IF IT WORKS AT ALL. I WOULDN'T SIT AROUND WAITING HERE.
WHAT WILL YOUR BOSS -- THE *ILLUSIVE MAN* -- DO ABOUT FERON?
THE DRELL KNEW THE RISKS WHEN HE OFFERED TO HELP. WE WON'T BE GOING AFTER HIM. IF *YOU* WANT TO, THAT'S YOUR BUSINESS --
-- BUT I'D FOCUS ON SOMETHING ELSE IF I WERE YOU. DO SOMETHING *YOU* WANT TO DO.

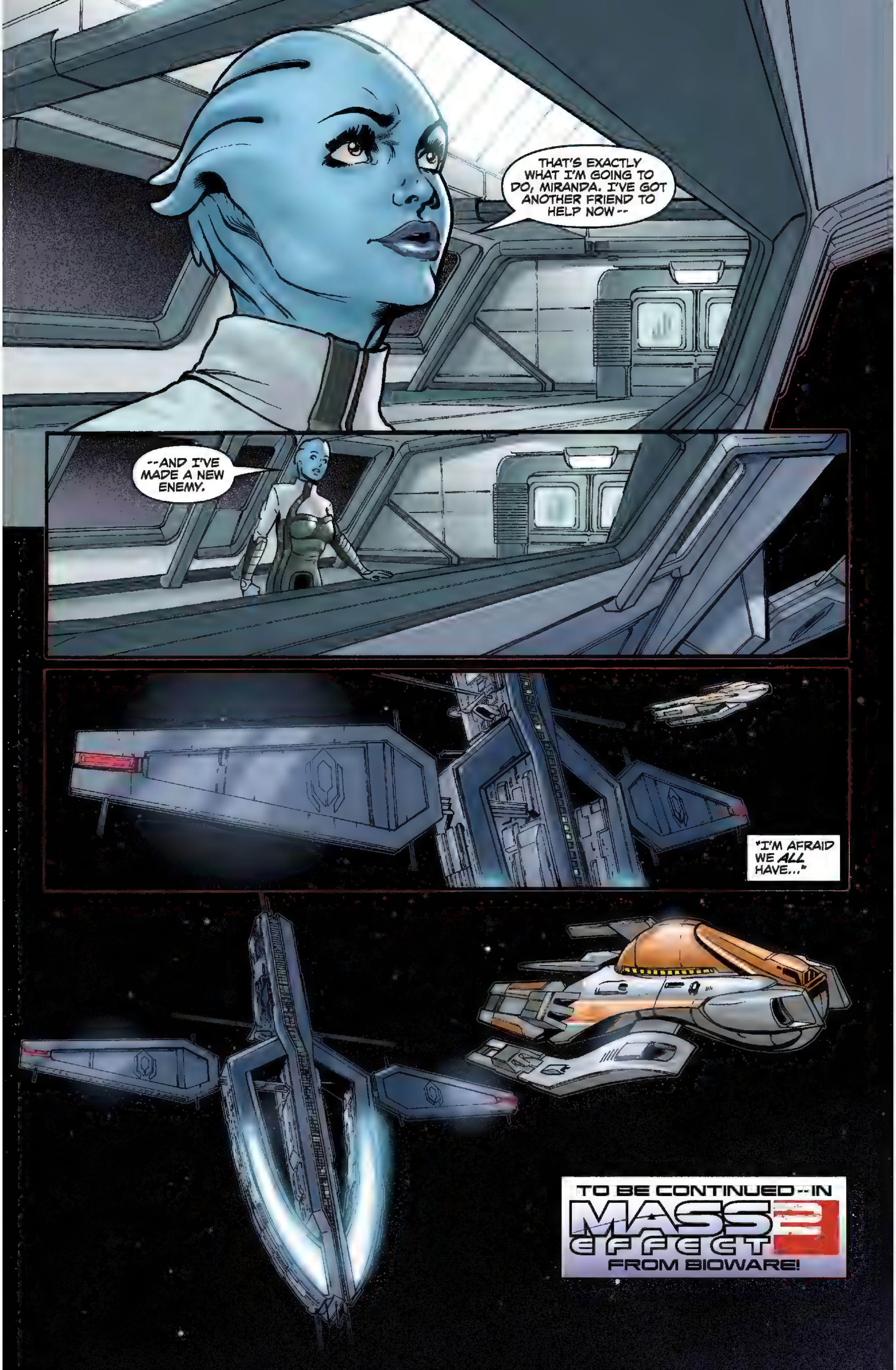

THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I'M GOING TO DO, MIRANDA. I'VE GOT ANOTHER FRIEND TO HELP NOW--
--AND I'VE MADE A NEW ENEMY.
"I'M AFRAID WE *ALL* HAVE..."
TO BE CONTINUED--IN
MASS EFFECT 3
FROM BIOWARE!

Illustration by Massimo Carnevale

EVOLUTION

STORY
Mac Walters

SCRIPT
John Jackson Miller

ART
Omar Francia with Manuel Silva

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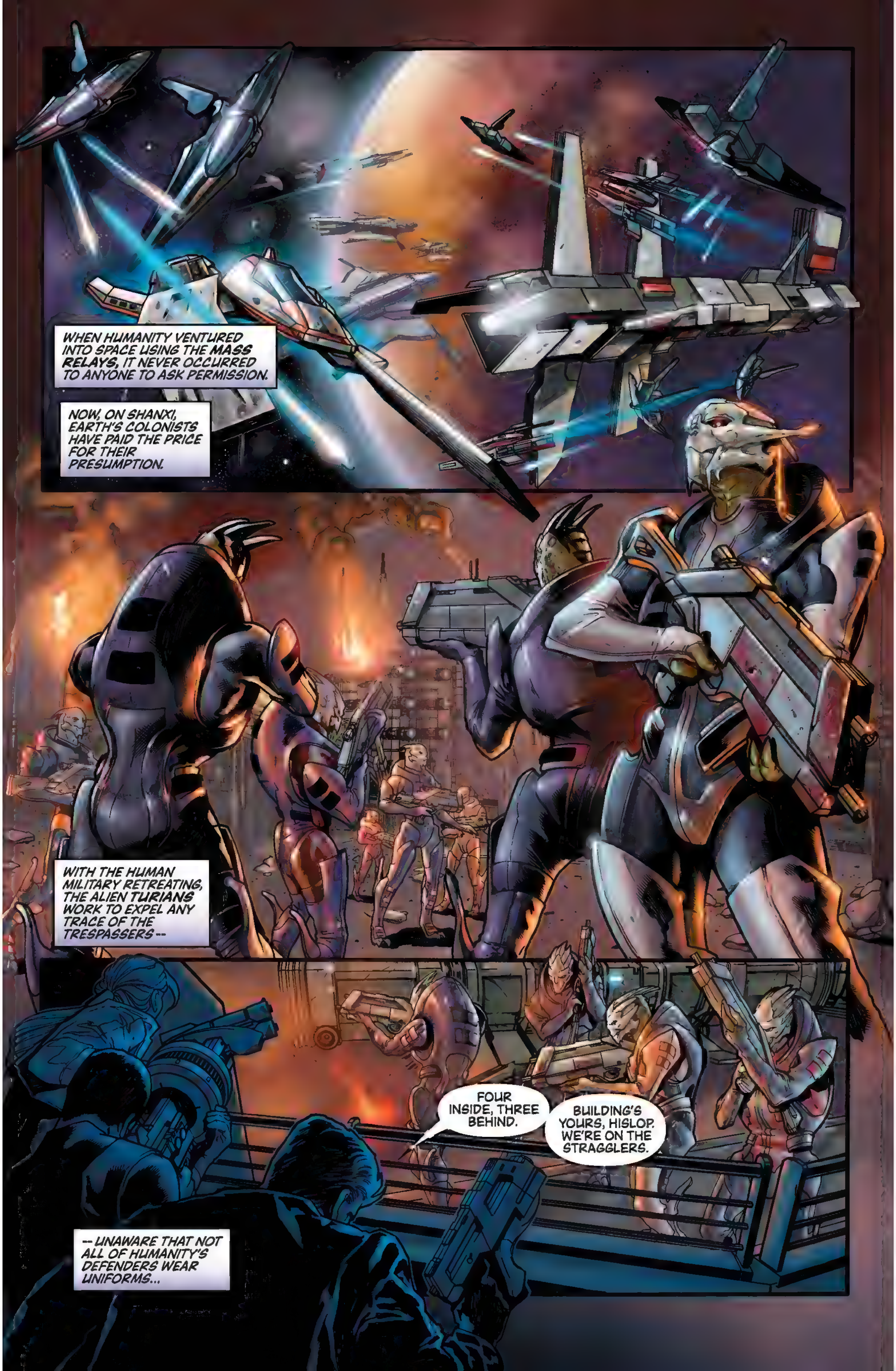
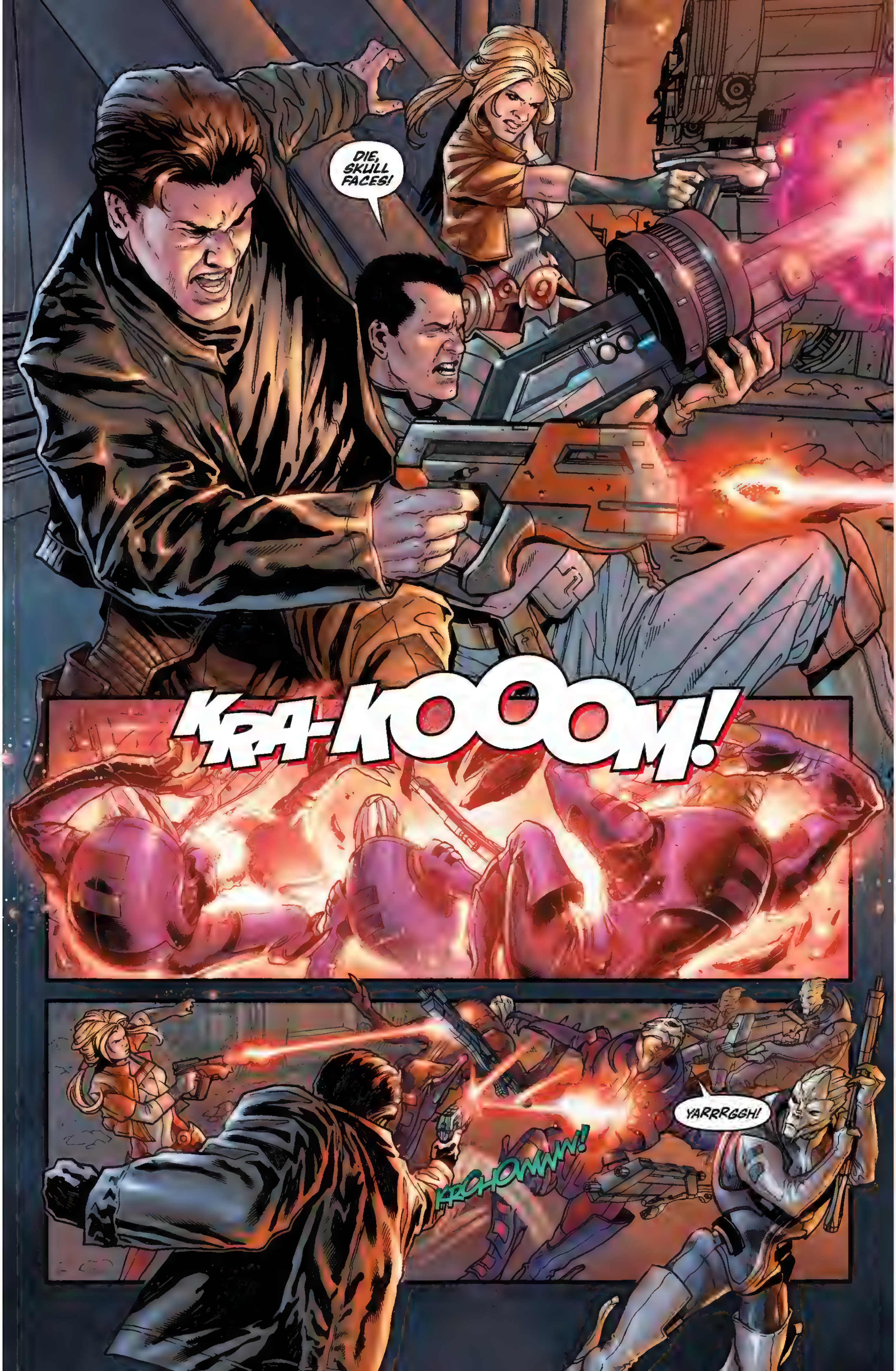
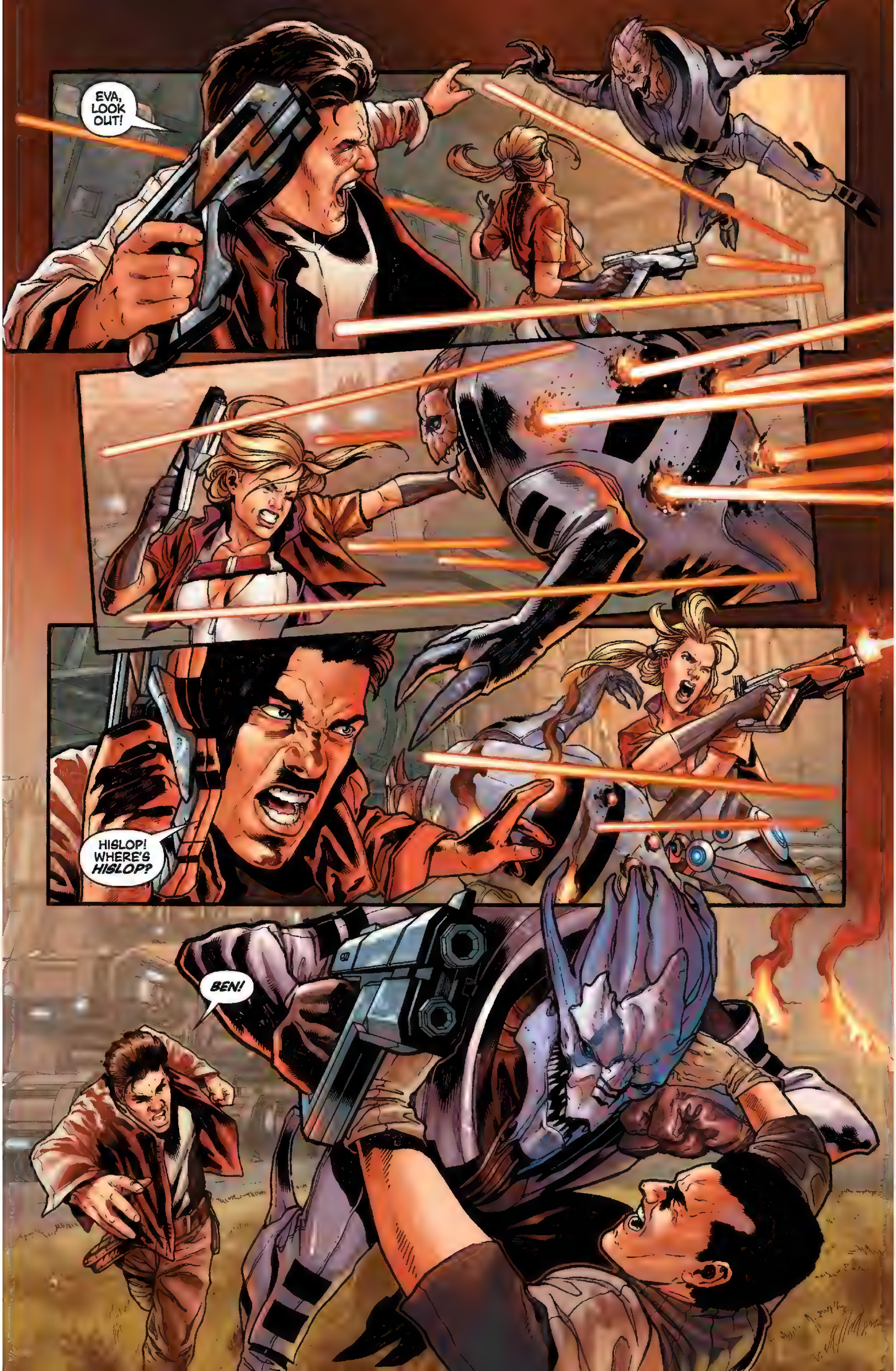
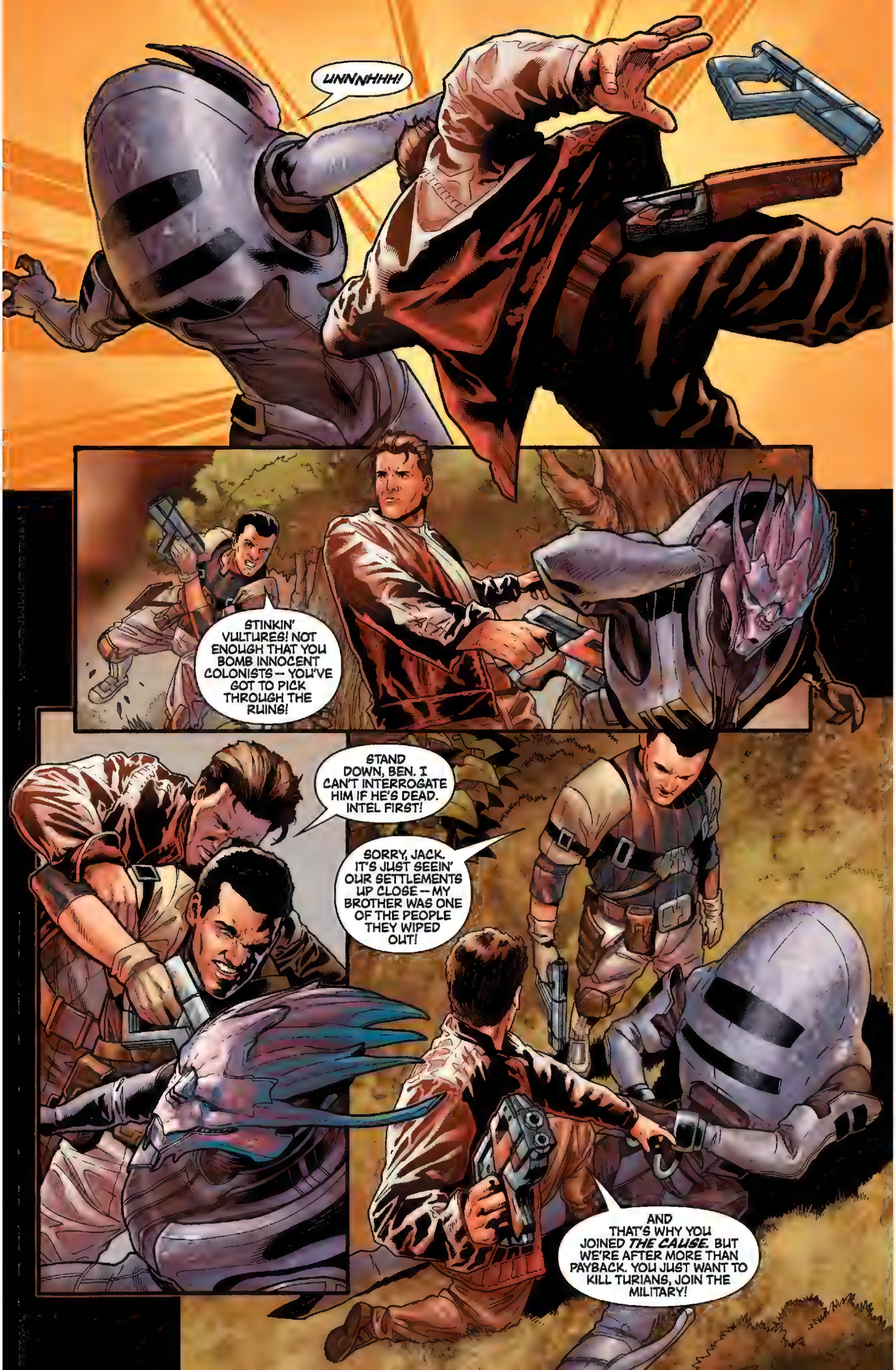
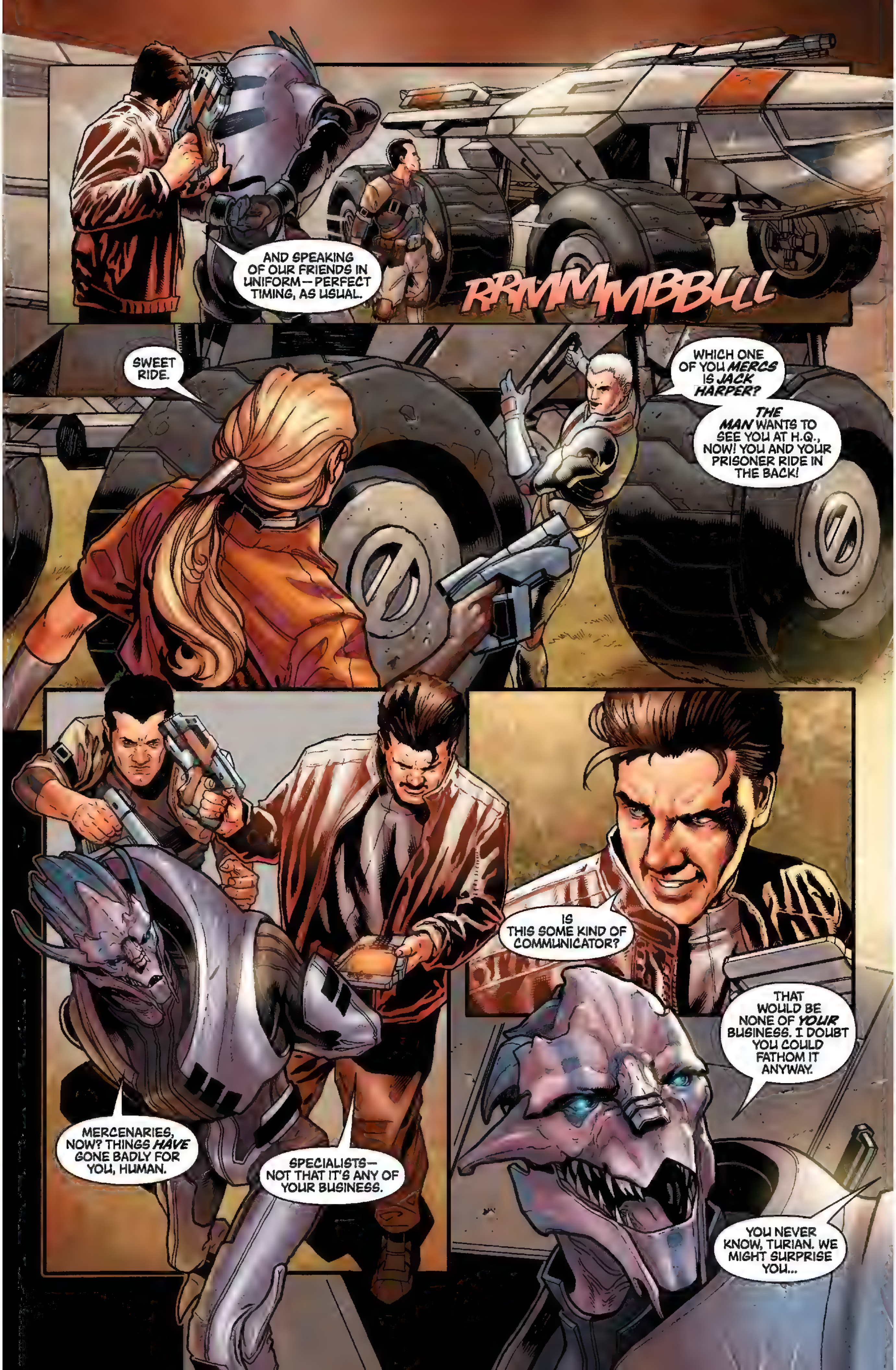
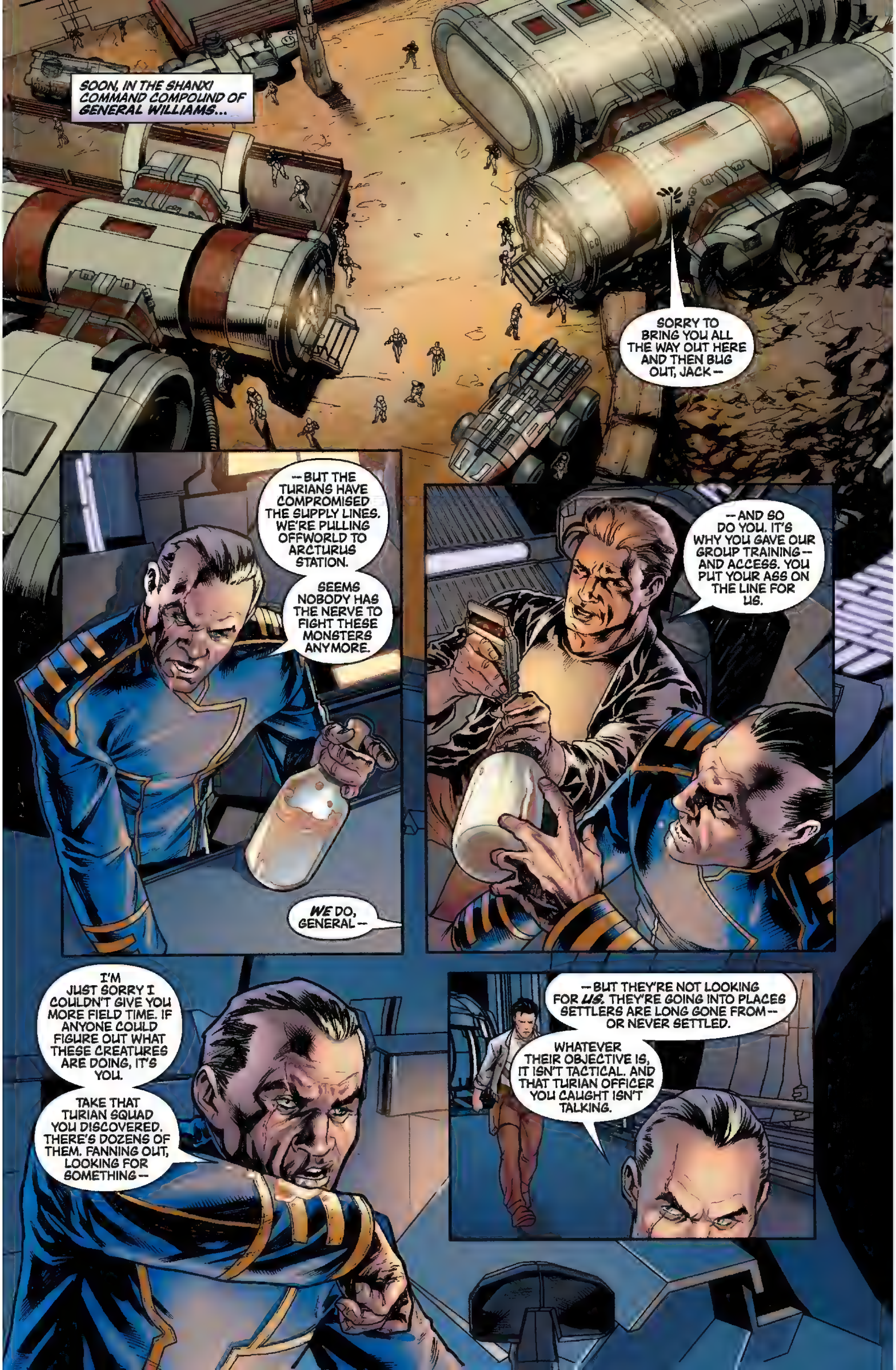

WHEN HUMANITY VENTURED INTO SPACE USING THE **MASS RELAYS**, IT NEVER OCCURRED TO ANYONE TO ASK PERMISSION.
NOW, ON SHANXI, EARTH'S COLONISTS HAVE PAID THE PRICE FOR THEIR PRESUMPTION.
WITH THE HUMAN MILITARY RETREATING, THE ALIEN **TURIANS** WORK TO EXPEL ANY TRACE OF THE TRESPASSERS--
FOUR INSIDE, THREE BEHIND.
BUILDING'S YOURS, HISLOP. WE'RE ON THE STRAGGLERS.
--UNAWARE THAT NOT ALL OF HUMANITY'S DEFENDERS WEAR UNIFORMS...

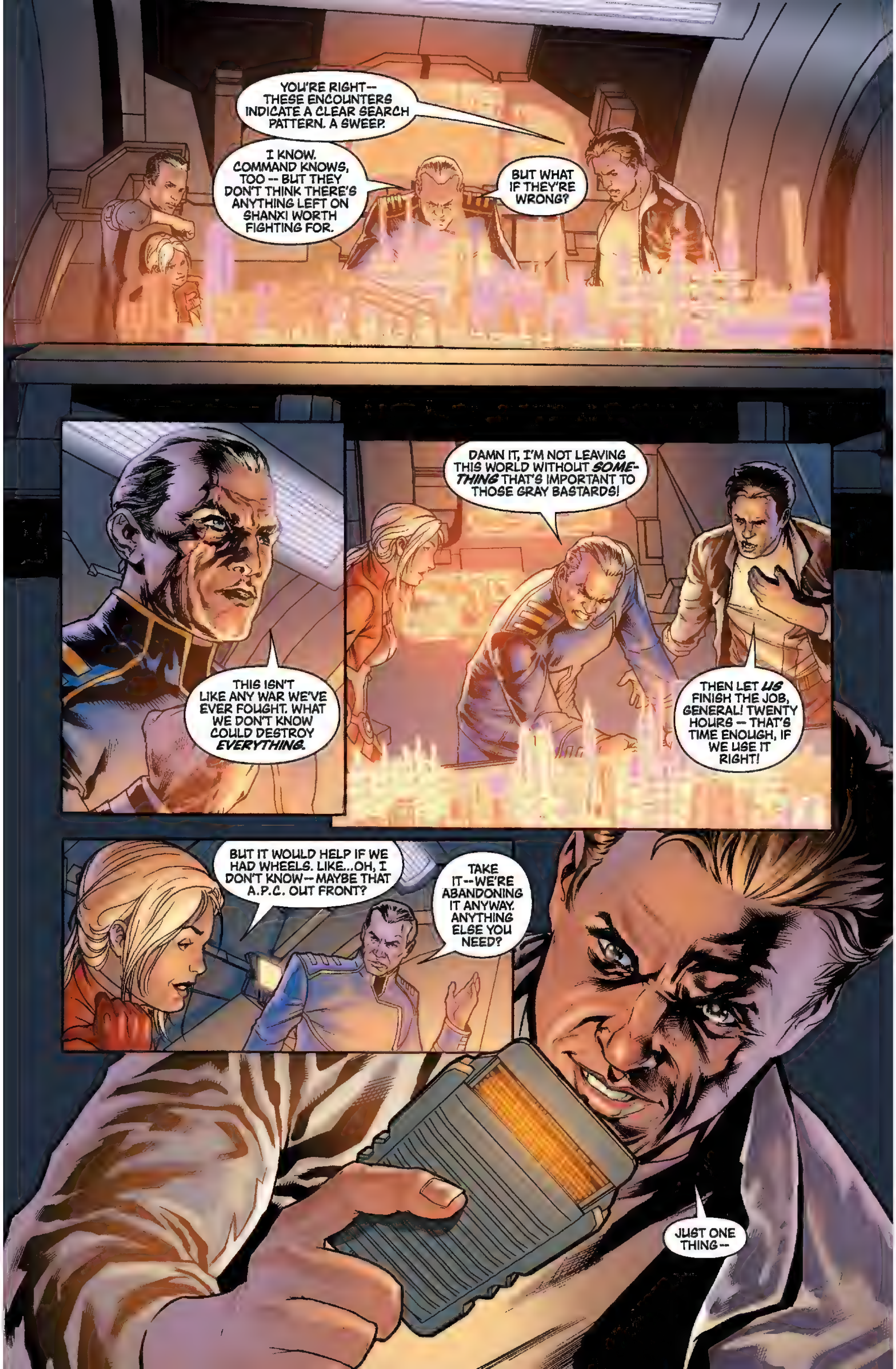

DIE, SKULL FACES!
KRA-KOOOOM!
YARRRGGH!
KRCHOWWW!

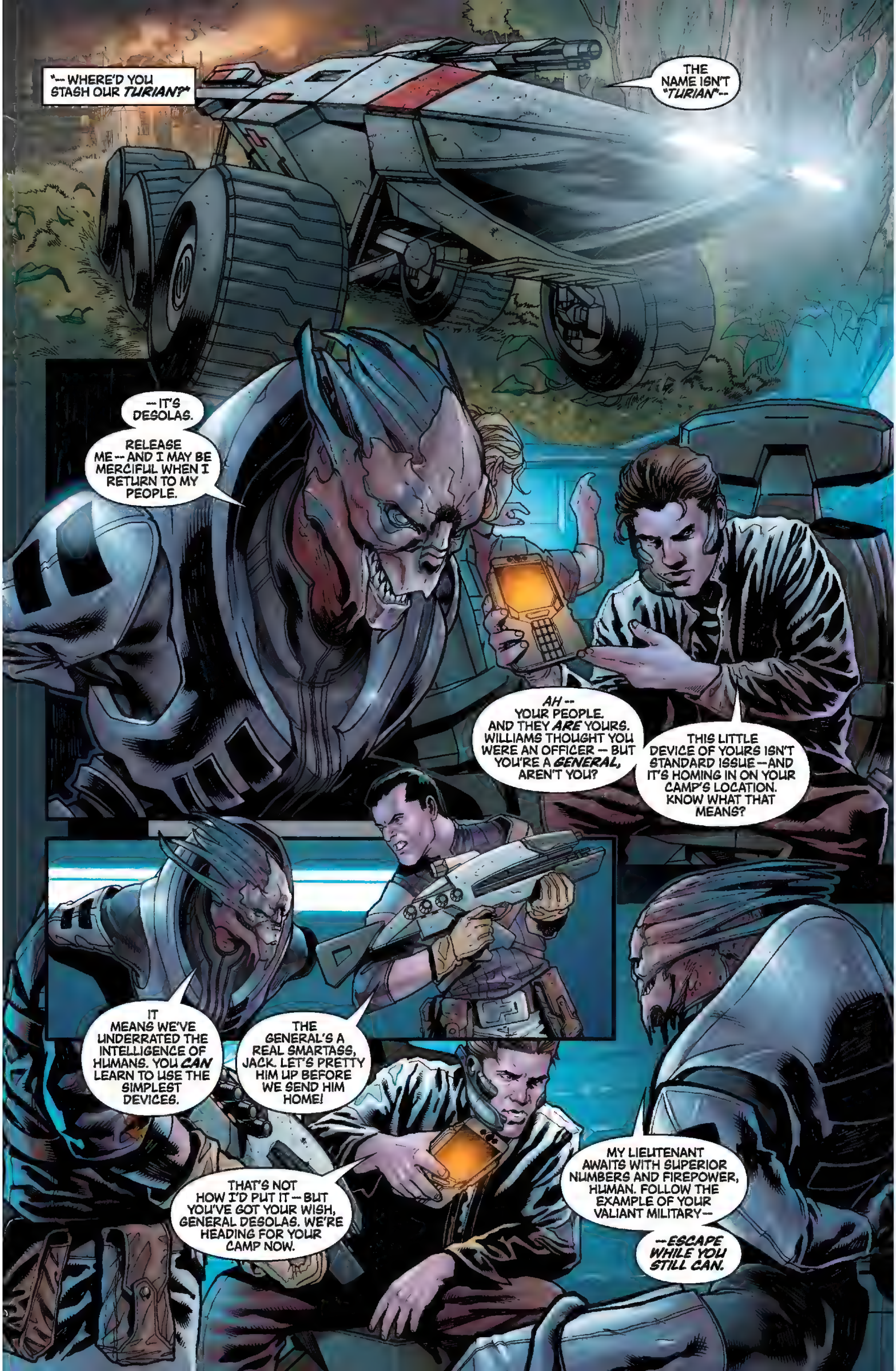

EVA, LOOK OUT!
HISLOP! WHERE'S HISLOP?
BEN!

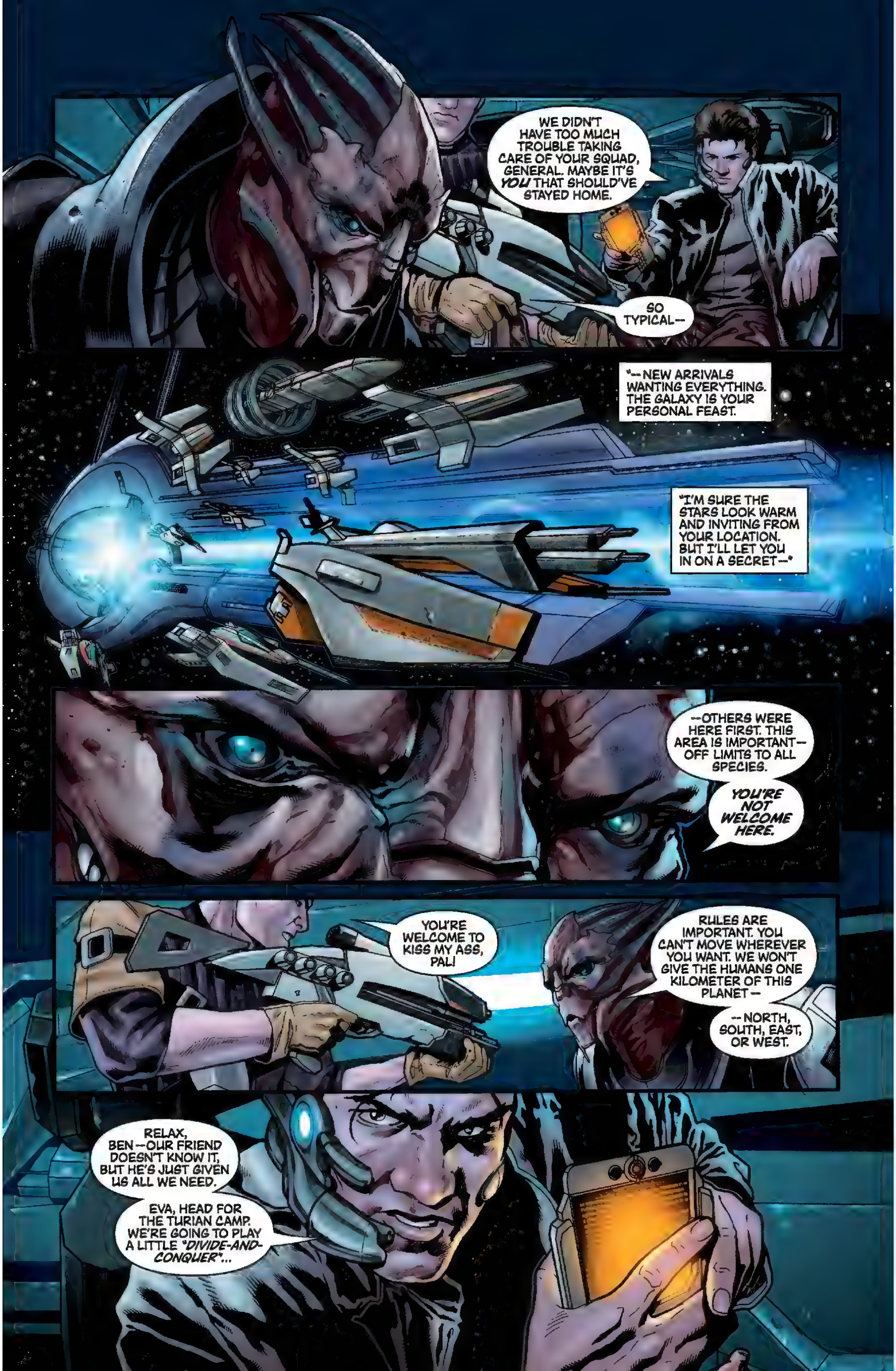

UNNNHHH!
STINKIN' VULTURES! NOT ENOUGH THAT YOU BOMB INNOCENT COLONISTS -- YOU'VE GOT TO PICK THROUGH THE RUINS!
STAND DOWN, BEN. I CAN'T INTERROGATE HIM IF HE'S DEAD. INTEL FIRST!
SORRY, JACK. IT'S JUST SEEIN' OUR SETTLEMENTS UP CLOSE -- MY BROTHER WAS ONE OF THE PEOPLE THEY WIPED OUT!
AND THAT'S WHY YOU JOINED *THE CAUSE*. BUT WE'RE AFTER MORE THAN PAYBACK. YOU JUST WANT TO KILL TURIANS, JOIN THE MILITARY!

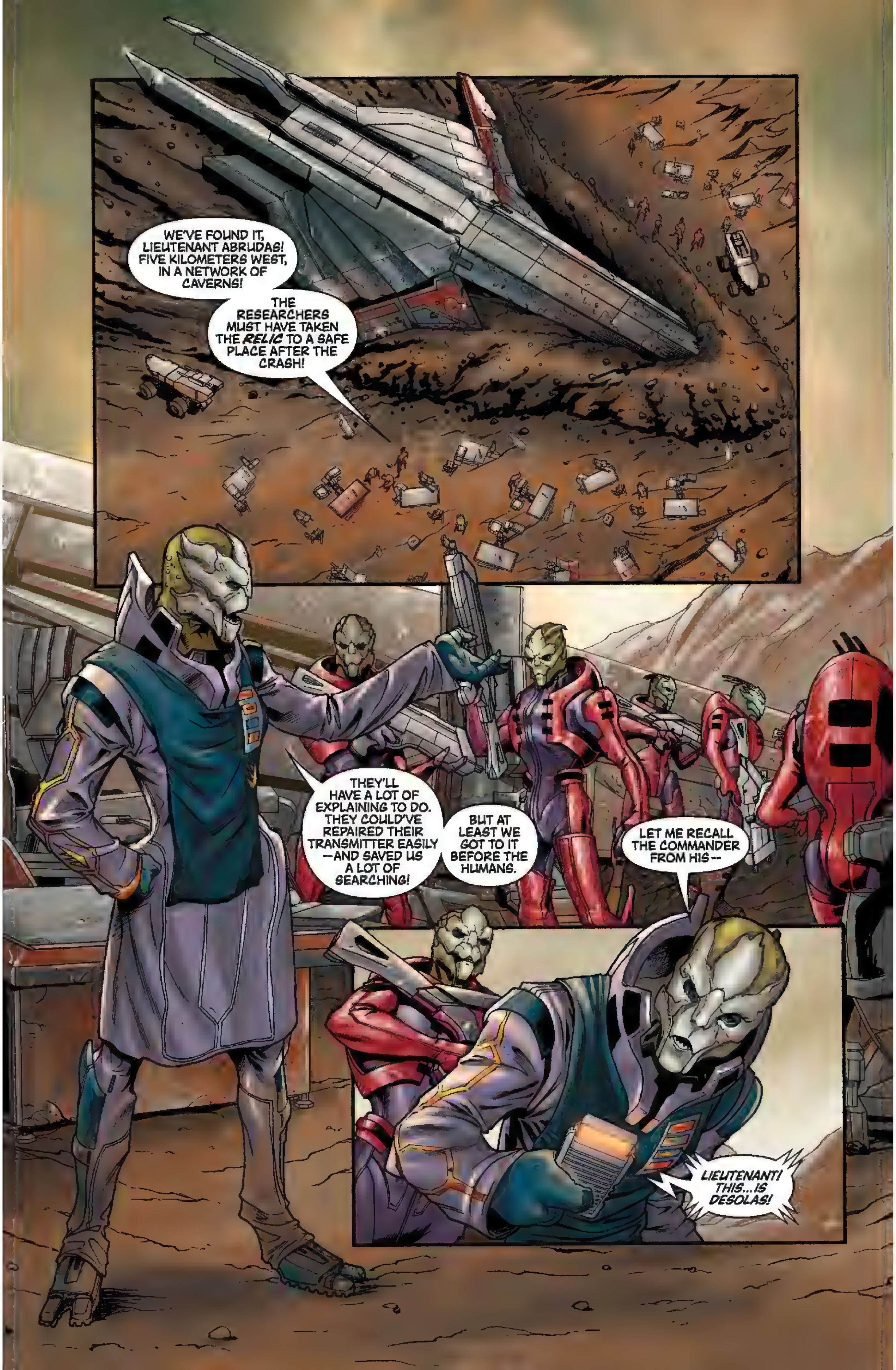

AND SPEAKING OF OUR FRIENDS IN UNIFORM—PERFECT TIMING, AS USUAL.
RRMMMBBLLL
SWEET RIDE.
WHICH ONE OF YOU *MERCS* IS *JACK HARPER?*
THE MAN WANTS TO SEE YOU AT H.Q., NOW! YOU AND YOUR PRISONER RIDE IN THE BACK!
IS THIS SOME KIND OF COMMUNICATOR?
THAT WOULD BE NONE OF *YOUR* BUSINESS. I DOUBT YOU COULD FATHOM IT ANYWAY.
MERCENARIES, NOW? THINGS *HAVE* GONE BADLY FOR YOU, HUMAN.
SPECIALISTS—NOT THAT IT'S ANY OF YOUR BUSINESS.
YOU NEVER KNOW, TURIAN. WE MIGHT SURPRISE YOU...

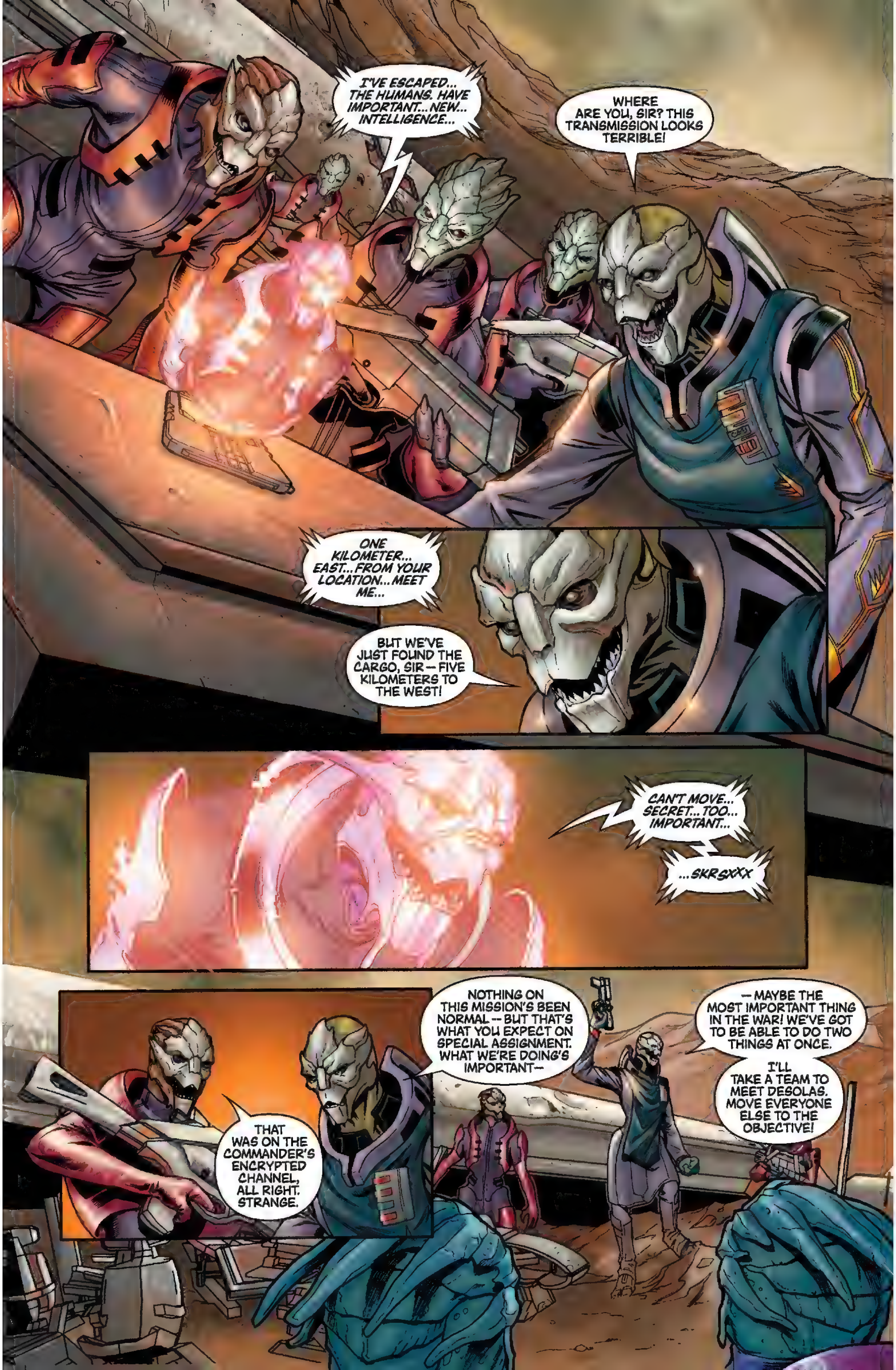

SOON, IN THE SHANXI COMMAND COMPOUND OF GENERAL WILLIAMS...
SORRY TO BRING YOU ALL THE WAY OUT HERE AND THEN BUG OUT, JACK --
-- BUT THE TURIANS HAVE COMPROMISED THE SUPPLY LINES. WE'RE PULLING OFFWORLD TO ARCTURUS STATION.
SEEMS NOBODY HAS THE NERVE TO FIGHT THESE MONSTERS ANYMORE.
WE DO, GENERAL --
-- AND SO DO YOU. IT'S WHY YOU GAVE OUR GROUP TRAINING -- AND ACCESS. YOU PUT YOUR ASS ON THE LINE FOR US.
I'M JUST SORRY I COULDN'T GIVE YOU MORE FIELD TIME. IF ANYONE COULD FIGURE OUT WHAT THESE CREATURES ARE DOING, IT'S YOU.
TAKE THAT TURIAN SQUAD YOU DISCOVERED. THERE'S DOZENS OF THEM. FANNING OUT, LOOKING FOR SOMETHING --
-- BUT THEY'RE NOT LOOKING FOR *US*. THEY'RE GOING INTO PLACES SETTLERS ARE LONG GONE FROM -- OR NEVER SETTLED.
WHATEVER THEIR OBJECTIVE IS, IT ISN'T TACTICAL. AND THAT TURIAN OFFICER YOU CAUGHT ISN'T TALKING.

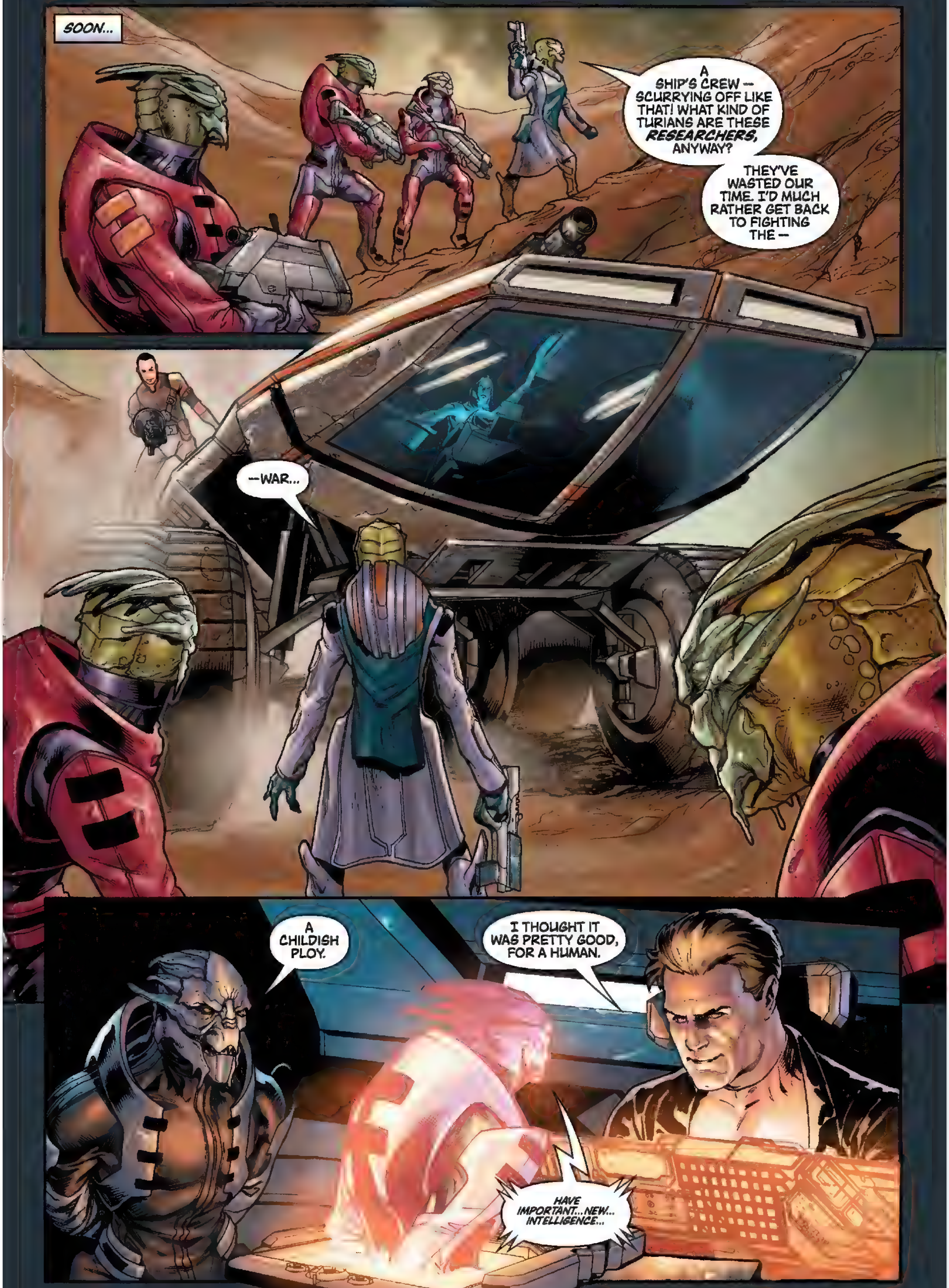

YOU'RE RIGHT-- THESE ENCOUNTERS INDICATE A CLEAR SEARCH PATTERN. A SWEEP.
I KNOW. COMMAND KNOWS, TOO -- BUT THEY DON'T THINK THERE'S ANYTHING LEFT ON SHANXI WORTH FIGHTING FOR.
BUT WHAT IF THEY'RE WRONG?
THIS ISN'T LIKE ANY WAR WE'VE EVER FOUGHT. WHAT WE DON'T KNOW COULD DESTROY *EVERYTHING*.
DAMN IT, I'M NOT LEAVING THIS WORLD WITHOUT *SOMETHING* THAT'S IMPORTANT TO THOSE GRAY BASTARDS!
THEN LET *US* FINISH THE JOB, GENERAL! TWENTY HOURS -- THAT'S TIME ENOUGH, IF WE USE IT RIGHT!
BUT IT WOULD HELP IF WE HAD WHEELS. LIKE...OH, I DON'T KNOW--MAYBE THAT A.P.C. OUT FRONT?
TAKE IT--WE'RE ABANDONING IT ANYWAY. ANYTHING ELSE YOU NEED?
JUST ONE THING--

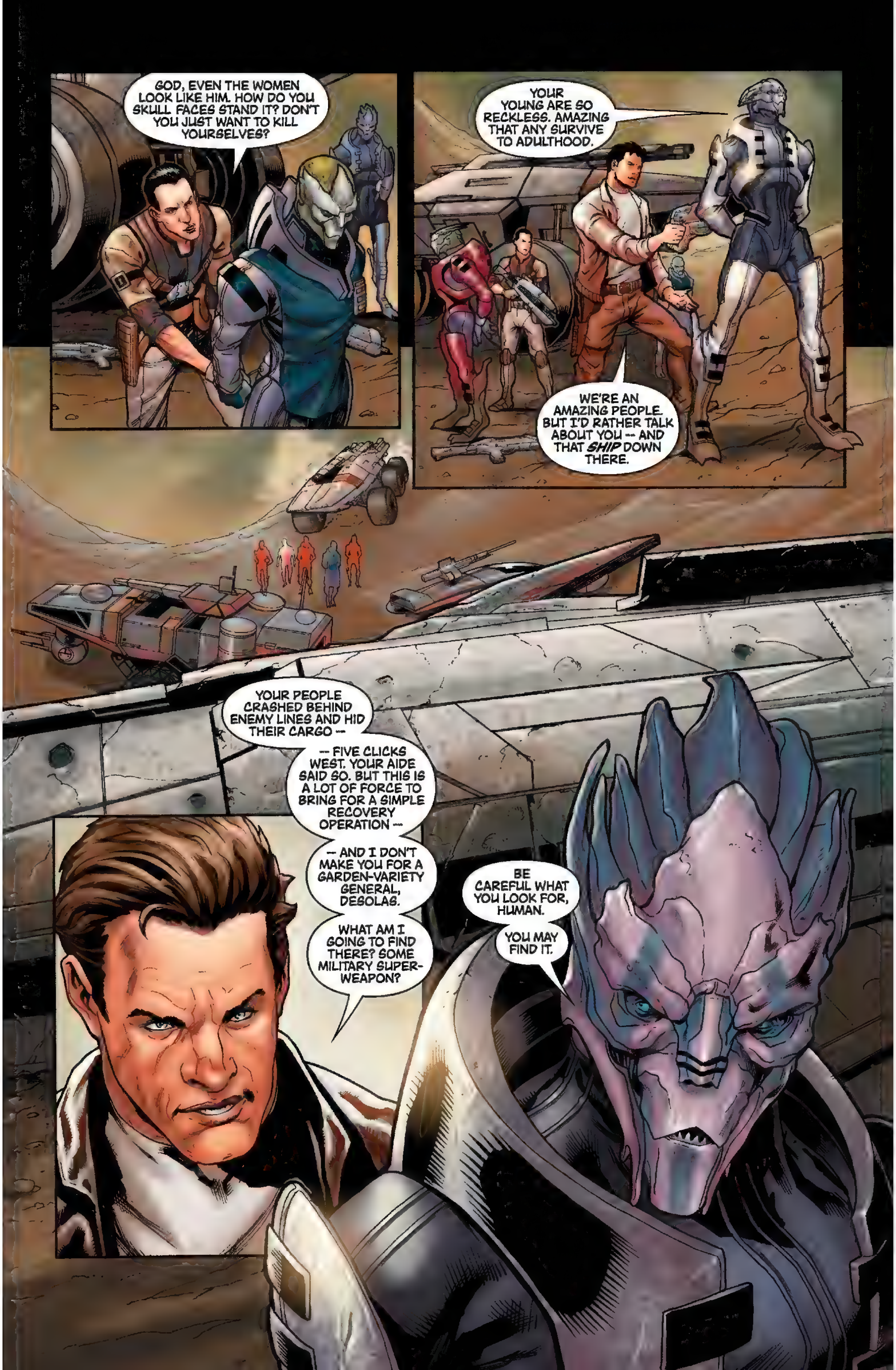

"-- WHERE'D YOU STASH OUR *TURIAN?*"
THE NAME ISN'T *"TURIAN"*--
--IT'S DESOLAS.
RELEASE ME -- AND I MAY BE MERCIFUL WHEN I RETURN TO MY PEOPLE.
AH -- YOUR PEOPLE. AND THEY *ARE* YOURS. WILLIAMS THOUGHT YOU WERE AN OFFICER -- BUT YOU'RE A *GENERAL,* AREN'T YOU?
THIS LITTLE DEVICE OF YOURS ISN'T STANDARD ISSUE -- AND IT'S HOMING IN ON YOUR CAMP'S LOCATION. KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?
IT MEANS WE'VE UNDERRATED THE INTELLIGENCE OF HUMANS. YOU *CAN* LEARN TO USE THE SIMPLEST DEVICES.
THE GENERAL'S A REAL SMARTASS, JACK. LET'S PRETTY HIM UP BEFORE WE SEND HIM HOME!
THAT'S NOT HOW I'D PUT IT -- BUT YOU'VE GOT YOUR WISH, GENERAL DESOLAS. WE'RE HEADING FOR YOUR CAMP NOW.
MY LIEUTENANT AWAITS WITH SUPERIOR NUMBERS AND FIREPOWER, HUMAN. FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF YOUR VALIANT MILITARY--
--*ESCAPE WHILE YOU STILL CAN.*

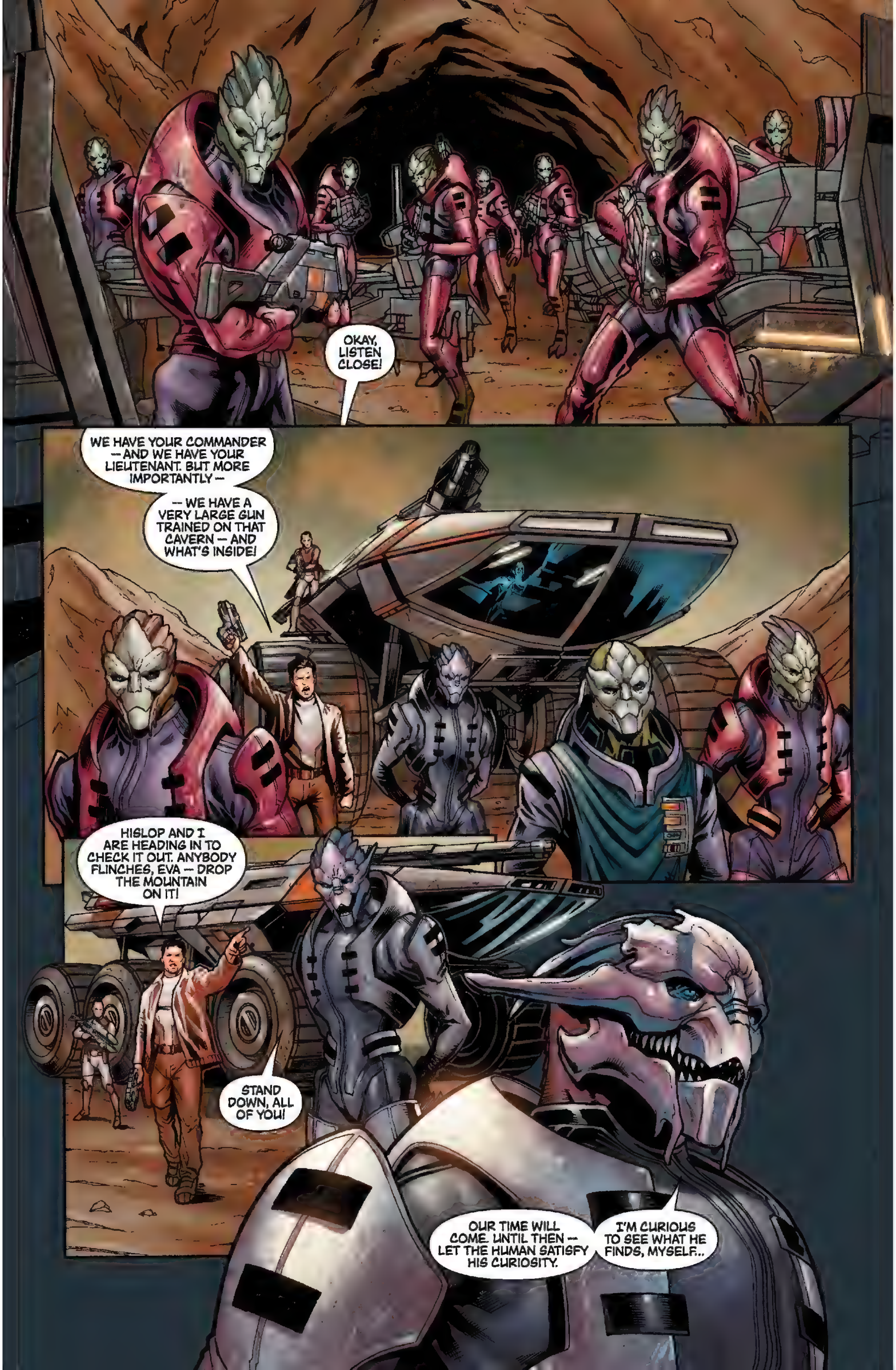

WE DIDN'T HAVE TOO MUCH TROUBLE TAKING CARE OF YOUR SQUAD, GENERAL. MAYBE IT'S *YOU* THAT SHOULD'VE STAYED HOME.
SO TYPICAL--
"--NEW ARRIVALS WANTING EVERYTHING. THE GALAXY IS YOUR PERSONAL FEAST.
"I'M SURE THE STARS LOOK WARM AND INVITING FROM YOUR LOCATION. BUT I'LL LET YOU IN ON A SECRET--"
--OTHERS WERE HERE FIRST. THIS AREA IS IMPORTANT-- OFF LIMITS TO ALL SPECIES.
YOU'RE NOT WELCOME HERE.
YOU'RE WELCOME TO KISS MY ASS, PAL!
RULES ARE IMPORTANT. YOU CAN'T MOVE WHEREVER YOU WANT. WE WON'T GIVE THE HUMANS ONE KILOMETER OF THIS PLANET--
--NORTH, SOUTH, EAST, OR WEST.
RELAX, BEN--OUR FRIEND DOESN'T KNOW IT, BUT HE'S JUST GIVEN US ALL WE NEED.
EVA, HEAD FOR THE TURIAN CAMP. WE'RE GOING TO PLAY A LITTLE *"DIVIDE-AND-CONQUER"*...

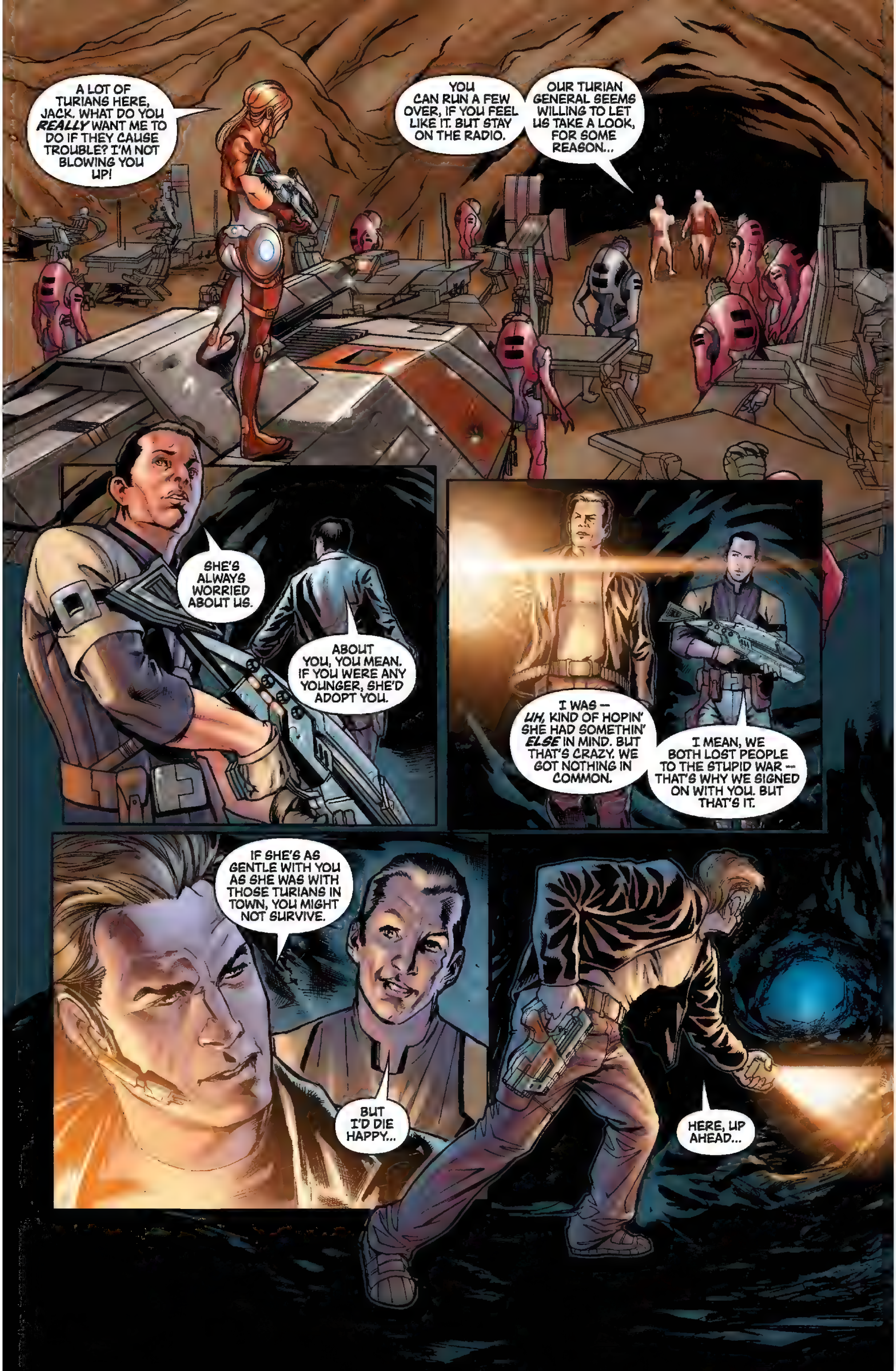

WE'VE FOUND IT, LIEUTENANT ABRUDAS! FIVE KILOMETERS WEST, IN A NETWORK OF CAVERNS!
THE RESEARCHERS MUST HAVE TAKEN THE *RELIC* TO A SAFE PLACE AFTER THE CRASH!
THEY'LL HAVE A LOT OF EXPLAINING TO DO. THEY COULD'VE REPAIRED THEIR TRANSMITTER EASILY --AND SAVED US A LOT OF SEARCHING!
BUT AT LEAST WE GOT TO IT BEFORE THE HUMANS.
LET ME RECALL THE COMMANDER FROM HIS --
LIEUTENANT! THIS...IS DESOLAS!

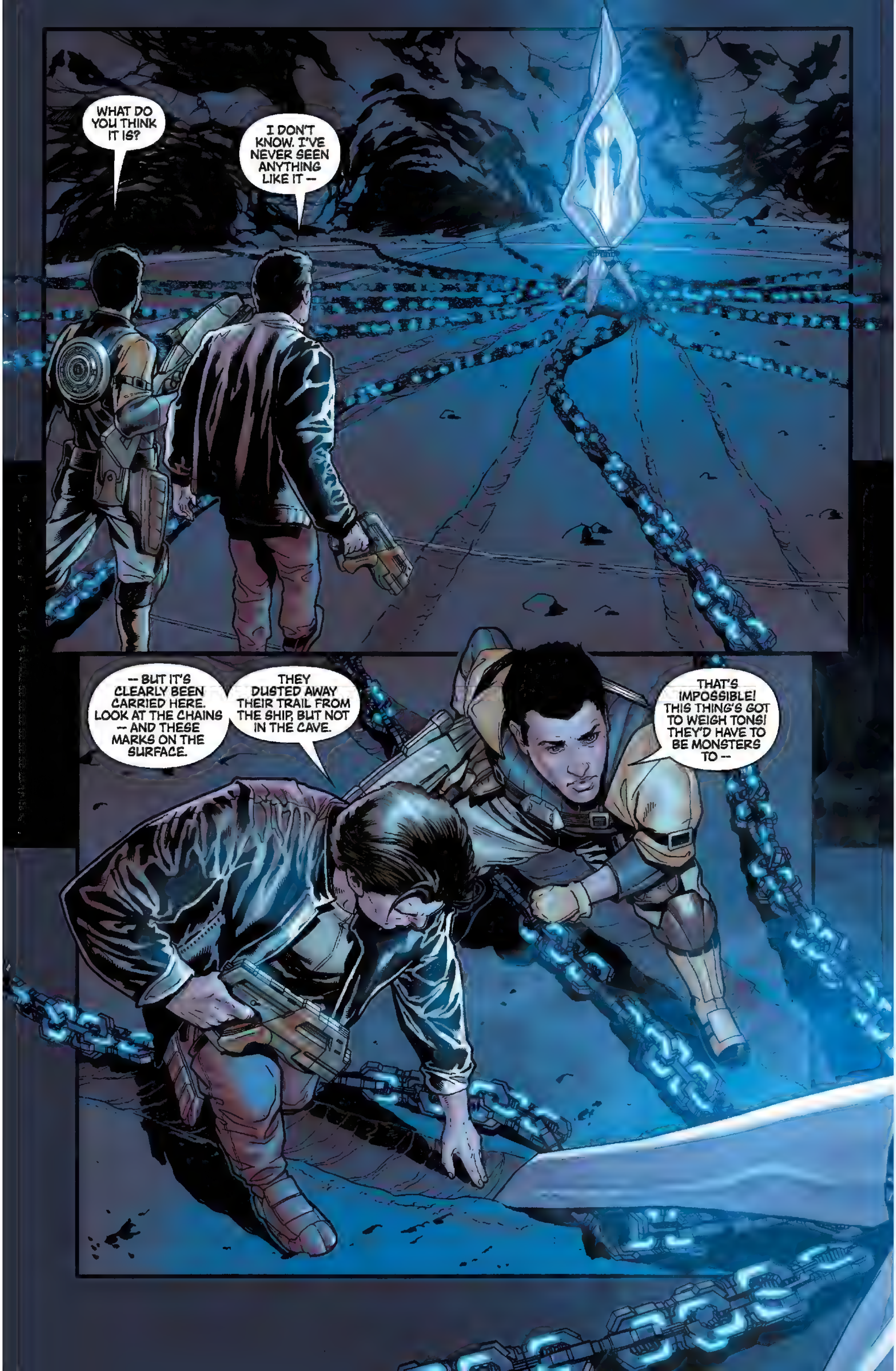

I'VE ESCAPED... THE HUMANS. HAVE IMPORTANT... NEW... INTELLIGENCE...
WHERE ARE YOU, SIR? THIS TRANSMISSION LOOKS TERRIBLE!
ONE KILOMETER... EAST... FROM YOUR LOCATION... MEET ME...
BUT WE'VE JUST FOUND THE CARGO, SIR -- FIVE KILOMETERS TO THE WEST!
CAN'T MOVE... SECRET... TOO... IMPORTANT...
...SKRSXXX
THAT WAS ON THE COMMANDER'S ENCRYPTED CHANNEL, ALL RIGHT. STRANGE.
NOTHING ON THIS MISSION'S BEEN NORMAL -- BUT THAT'S WHAT YOU EXPECT ON SPECIAL ASSIGNMENT. WHAT WE'RE DOING'S IMPORTANT--
-- MAYBE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN THE WAR! WE'VE GOT TO BE ABLE TO DO TWO THINGS AT ONCE.
I'LL TAKE A TEAM TO MEET DESOLAS. MOVE EVERYONE ELSE TO THE OBJECTIVE!

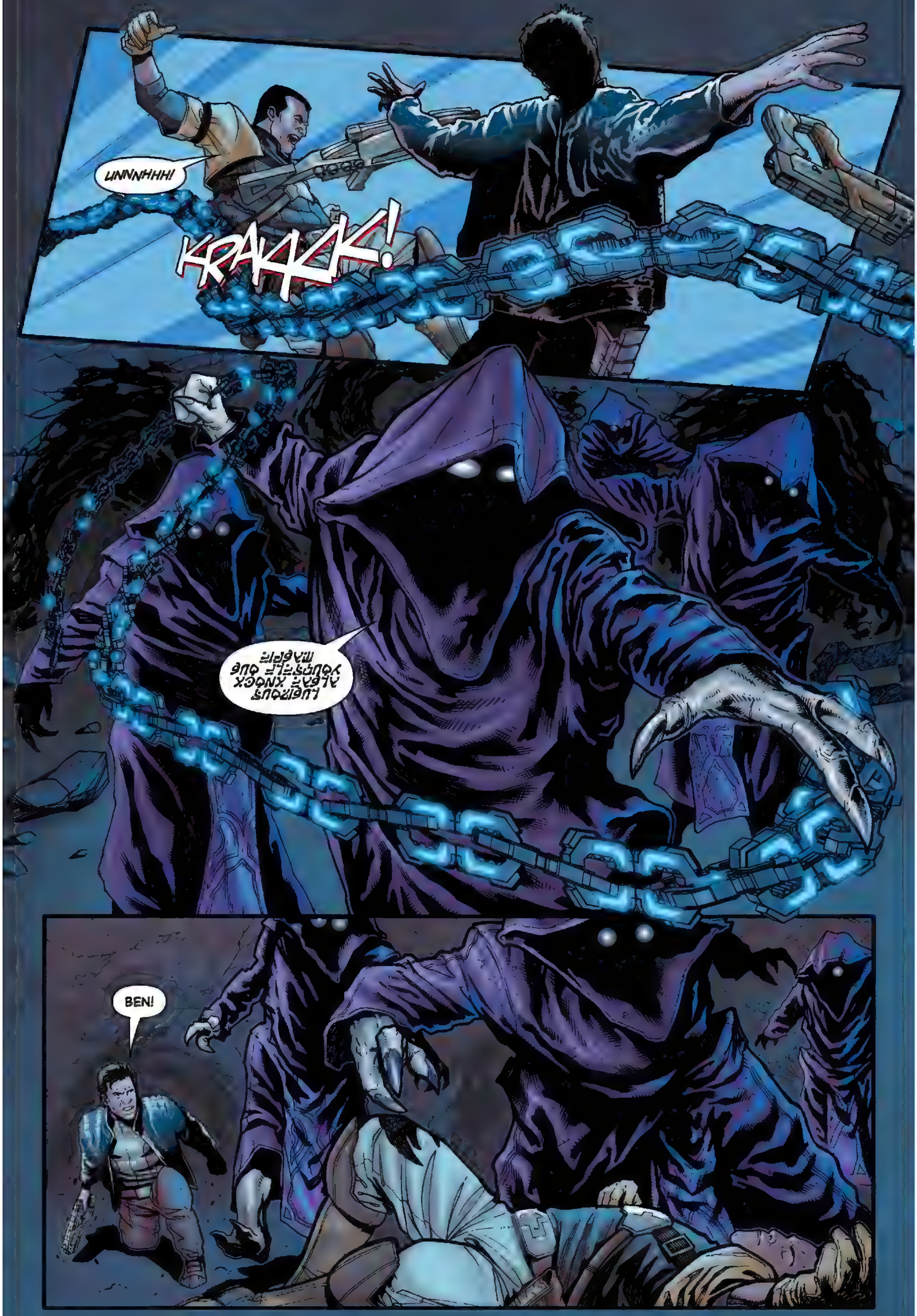

SOON...
A SHIP'S CREW -- SCURRYING OFF LIKE THAT! WHAT KIND OF TURIANS ARE THESE *RESEARCHERS,* ANYWAY?
THEY'VE WASTED OUR TIME. I'D MUCH RATHER GET BACK TO FIGHTING THE --
--WAR...
A CHILDISH PLOY.
I THOUGHT IT WAS PRETTY GOOD, FOR A HUMAN.
HAVE IMPORTANT...NEW... INTELLIGENCE...

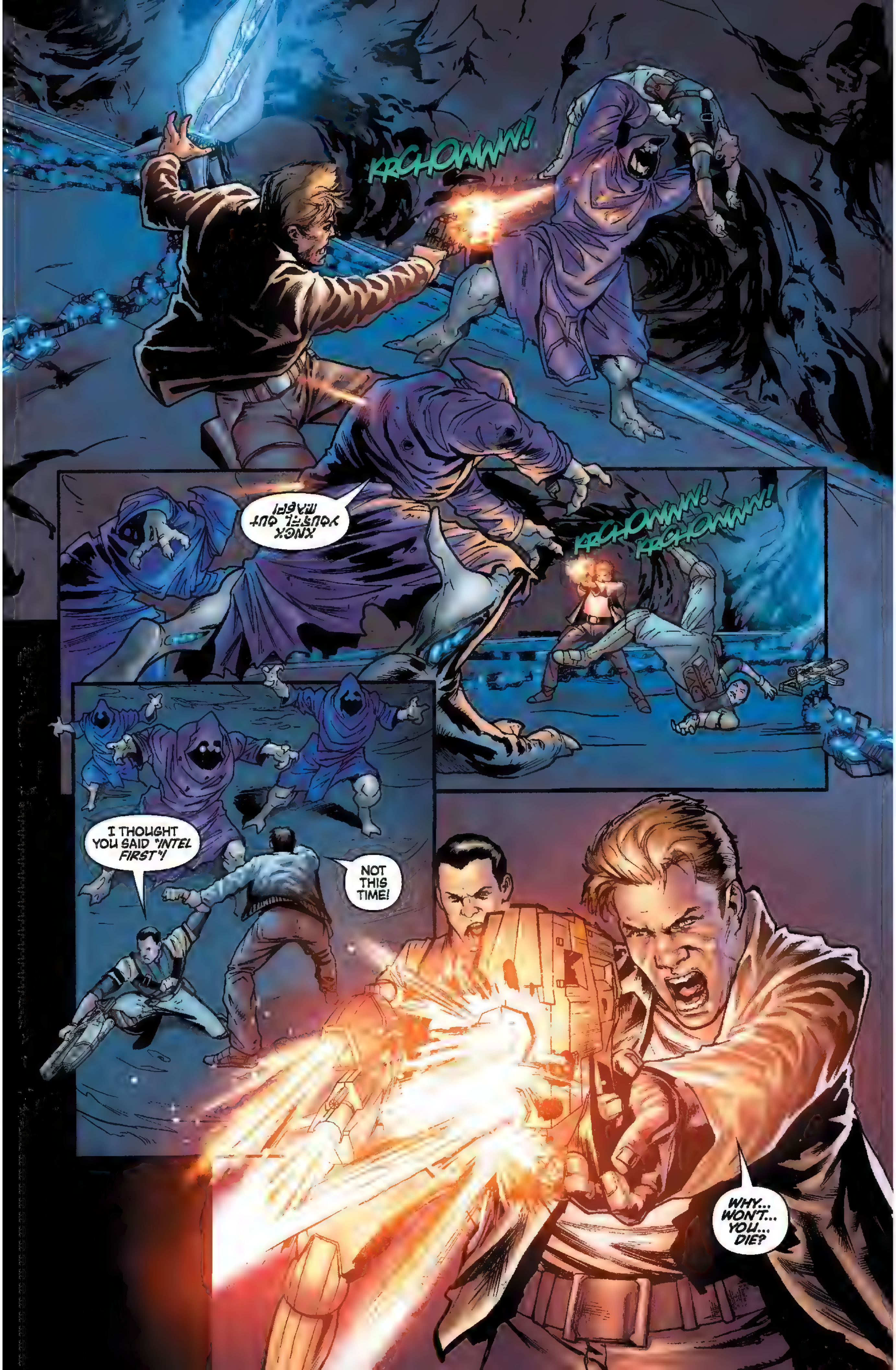

GOD, EVEN THE WOMEN LOOK LIKE HIM. HOW DO YOU SKULL FACES STAND IT? DON'T YOU JUST WANT TO KILL YOURSELVES?
YOUR YOUNG ARE SO RECKLESS. AMAZING THAT ANY SURVIVE TO ADULTHOOD.
WE'RE AN AMAZING PEOPLE. BUT I'D RATHER TALK ABOUT YOU -- AND THAT *SHIP* DOWN THERE.
YOUR PEOPLE CRASHED BEHIND ENEMY LINES AND HID THEIR CARGO --
-- FIVE CLICKS WEST. YOUR AIDE SAID SO. BUT THIS IS A LOT OF FORCE TO BRING FOR A SIMPLE RECOVERY OPERATION --
-- AND I DON'T MAKE YOU FOR A GARDEN-VARIETY GENERAL, DESOLAS.
WHAT AM I GOING TO FIND THERE? SOME MILITARY SUPER-WEAPON?
BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU LOOK FOR, HUMAN.
YOU MAY FIND IT.

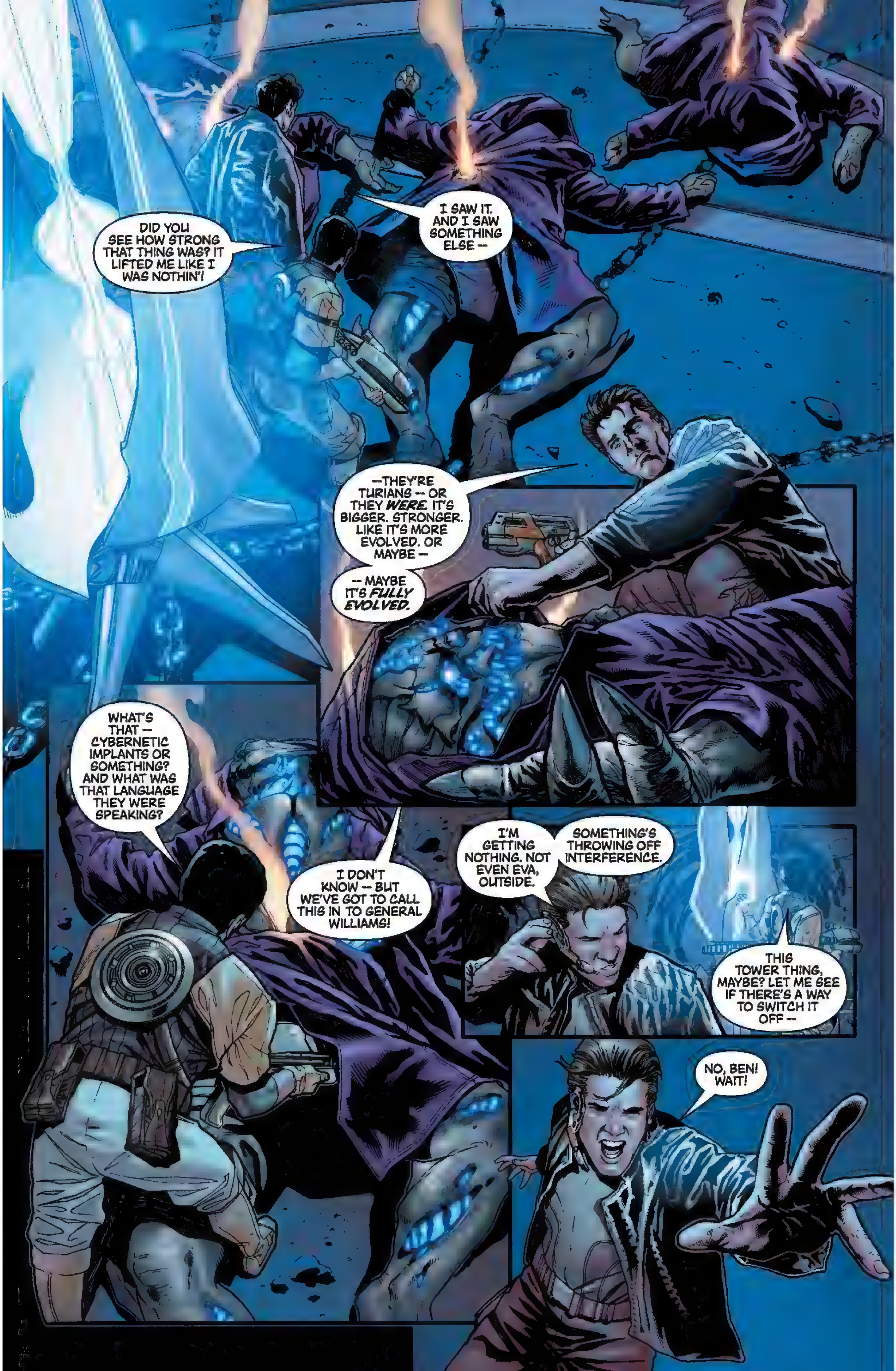

OKAY, LISTEN CLOSE!
WE HAVE YOUR COMMANDER -- AND WE HAVE YOUR LIEUTENANT. BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY --
-- WE HAVE A VERY LARGE GUN TRAINED ON THAT CAVERN -- AND WHAT'S INSIDE!
HISLOP AND I ARE HEADING IN TO CHECK IT OUT. ANYBODY FLINCHES, EVA -- DROP THE MOUNTAIN ON IT!
STAND DOWN, ALL OF YOU!
OUR TIME WILL COME. UNTIL THEN -- LET THE HUMAN SATISFY HIS CURIOSITY.
I'M CURIOUS TO SEE WHAT HE FINDS, MYSELF...

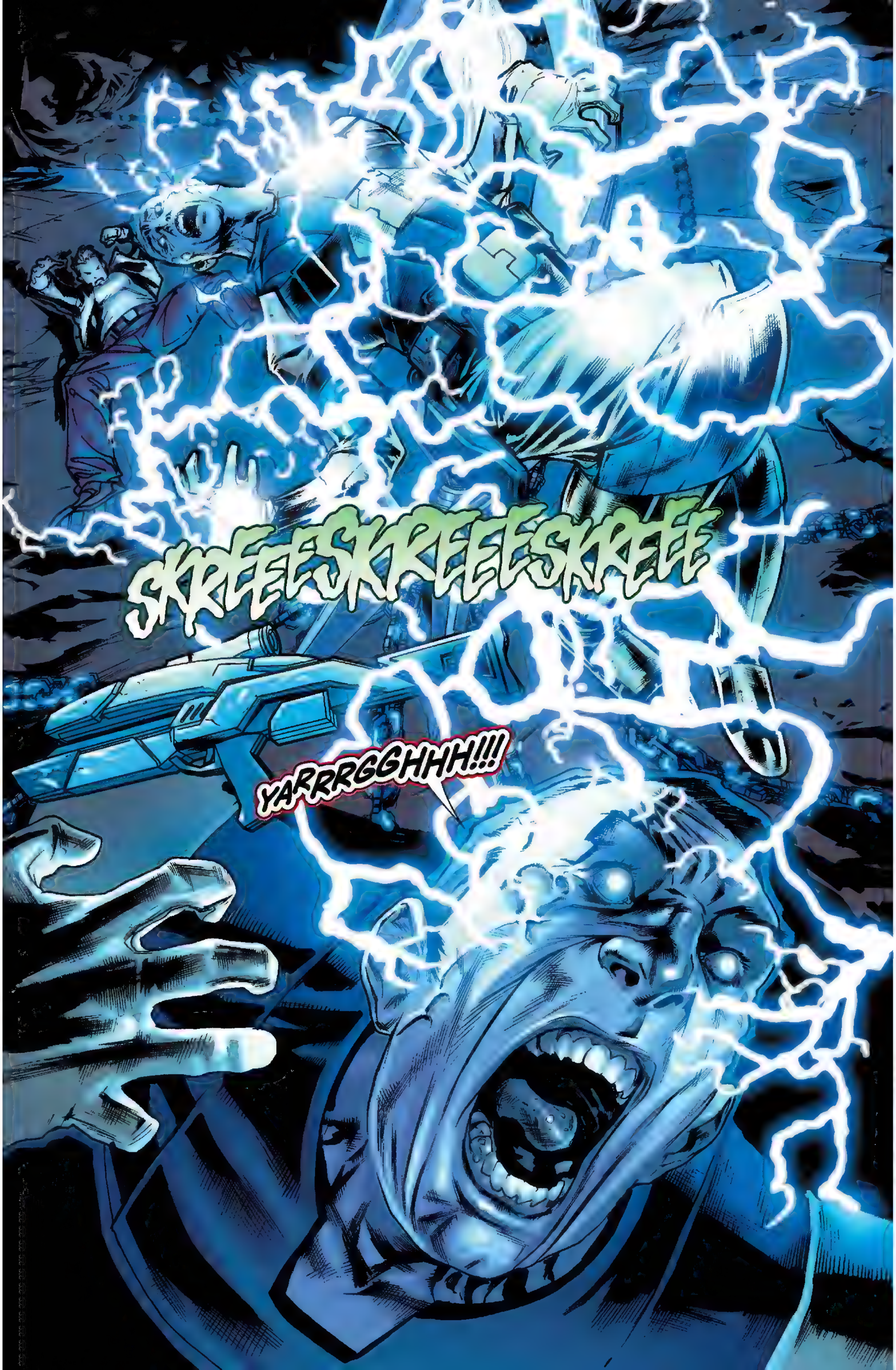

A LOT OF TURIANS HERE, JACK. WHAT DO YOU *REALLY* WANT ME TO DO IF THEY CAUSE TROUBLE? I'M NOT BLOWING YOU UP!
YOU CAN RUN A FEW OVER, IF YOU FEEL LIKE IT. BUT STAY ON THE RADIO.
OUR TURIAN GENERAL SEEMS WILLING TO LET US TAKE A LOOK, FOR SOME REASON...
SHE'S ALWAYS WORRIED ABOUT US.
ABOUT YOU, YOU MEAN. IF YOU WERE ANY YOUNGER, SHE'D ADOPT YOU.
I WAS -- *UH,* KIND OF HOPIN' SHE HAD SOMETHIN' *ELSE* IN MIND. BUT THAT'S CRAZY. WE GOT NOTHING IN COMMON.
I MEAN, WE BOTH LOST PEOPLE TO THE STUPID WAR -- THAT'S WHY WE SIGNED ON WITH YOU. BUT THAT'S IT.
IF SHE'S AS GENTLE WITH YOU AS SHE WAS WITH THOSE TURIANS IN TOWN, YOU MIGHT NOT SURVIVE.
BUT I'D DIE HAPPY...
HERE, UP AHEAD...

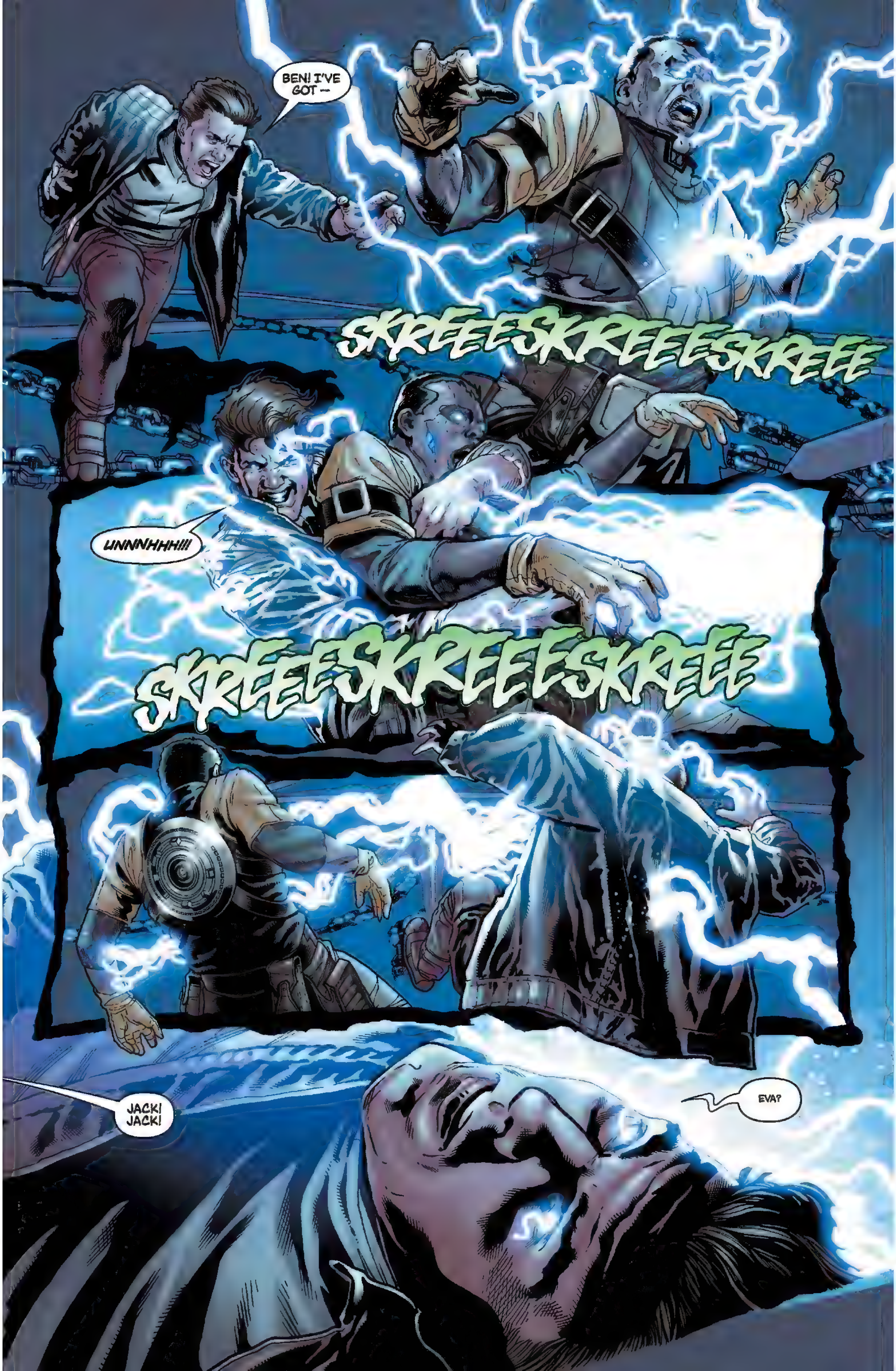

WHAT DO YOU THINK IT IS?
I DON'T KNOW. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT --
-- BUT IT'S CLEARLY BEEN CARRIED HERE. LOOK AT THE CHAINS -- AND THESE MARKS ON THE SURFACE.
THEY DUSTED AWAY THEIR TRAIL FROM THE SHIP, BUT NOT IN THE CAVE.
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! THIS THING'S GOT TO WEIGH TONS! THEY'D HAVE TO BE MONSTERS TO --

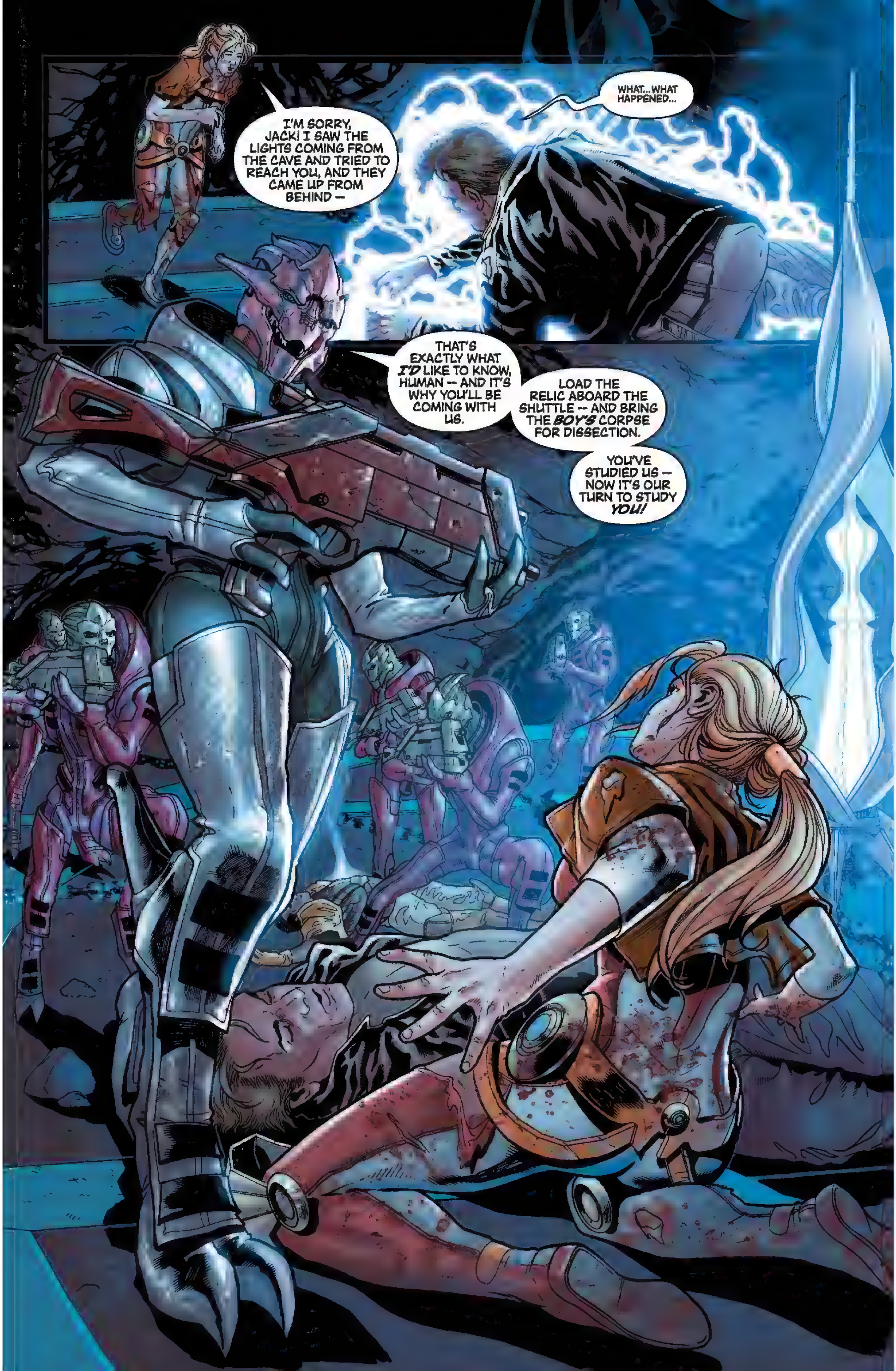

UNNNHHH!
KRAKKK!
BEN!

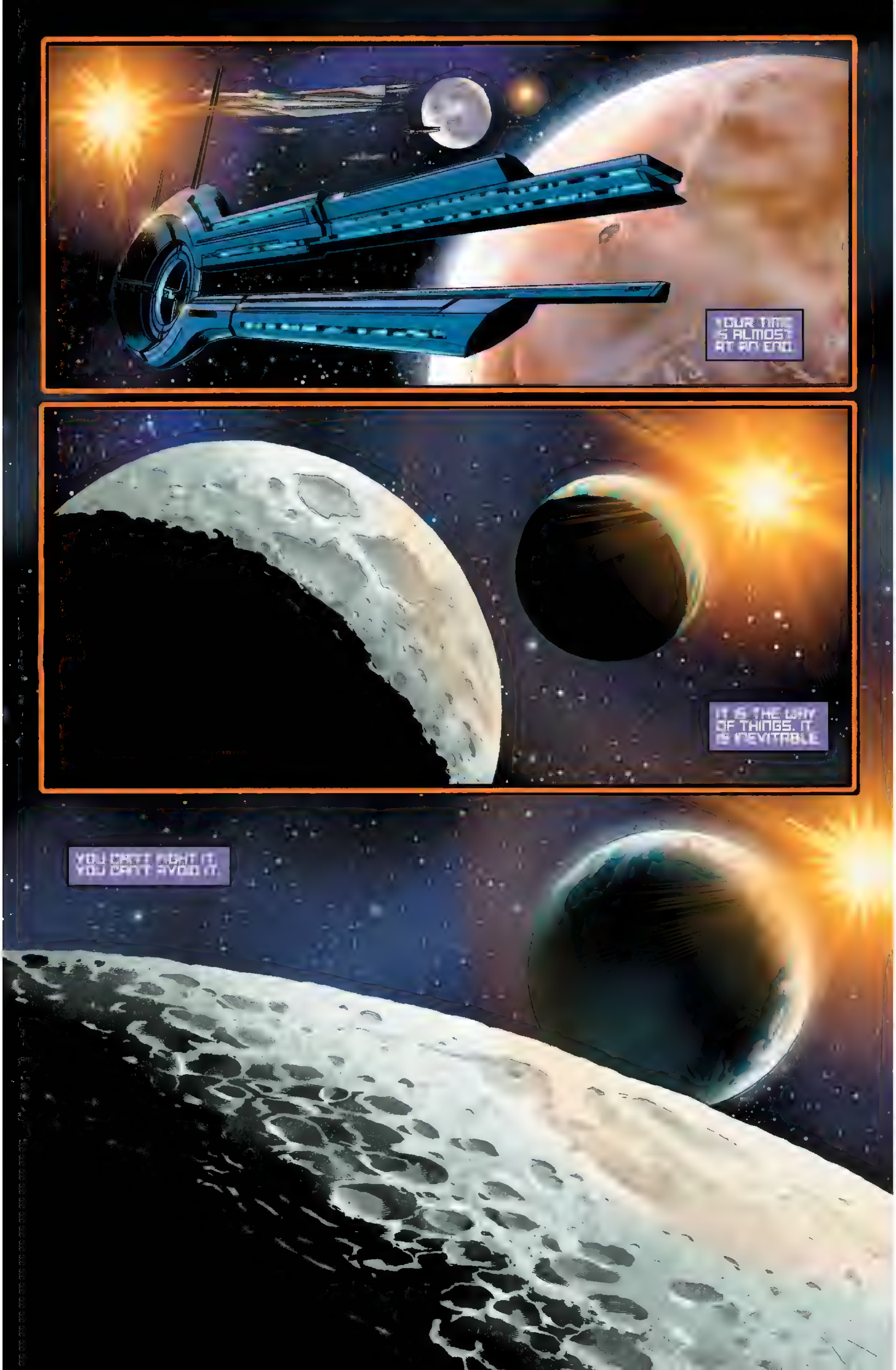

KRCHOWWW!
KRCHOWWW!
KRCHOWWW!
I THOUGHT YOU SAID "INTEL FIRST"!
NOT THIS TIME!
WHY... WON'T... YOU... DIE?

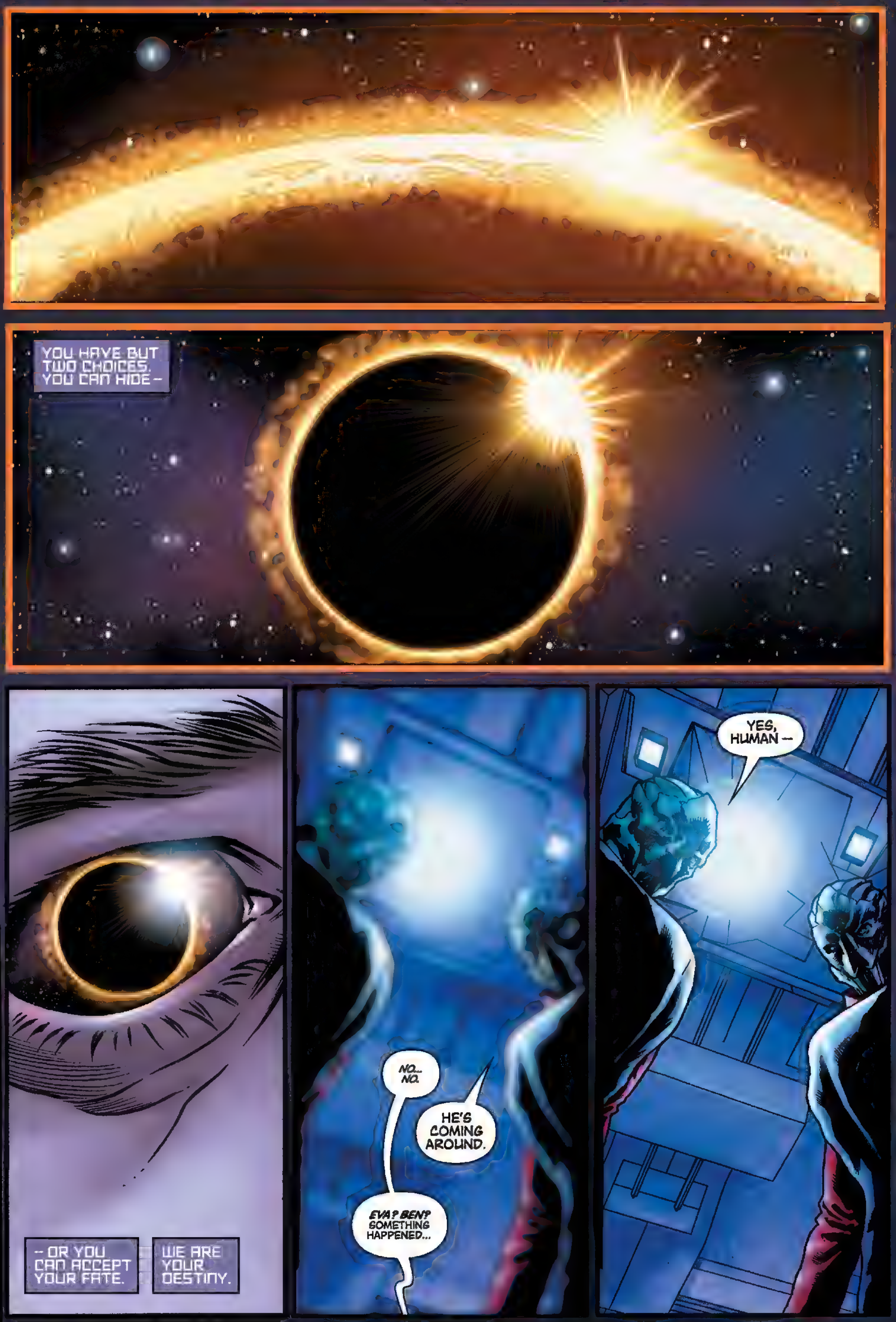

DID YOU SEE HOW STRONG THAT THING WAS? IT LIFTED ME LIKE I WAS NOTHIN'!
I SAW IT. AND I SAW SOMETHING ELSE --
--THEY'RE TURIANS -- OR THEY *WERE*. IT'S BIGGER. STRONGER. LIKE IT'S MORE EVOLVED. OR MAYBE --
-- MAYBE IT'S *FULLY EVOLVED*.
WHAT'S THAT -- CYBERNETIC IMPLANTS OR SOMETHING? AND WHAT WAS THAT LANGUAGE THEY WERE SPEAKING?
I DON'T KNOW -- BUT WE'VE GOT TO CALL THIS IN TO GENERAL WILLIAMS!
I'M GETTING NOTHING. NOT EVEN EVA, OUTSIDE.
SOMETHING'S THROWING OFF INTERFERENCE.
THIS TOWER THING, MAYBE? LET ME SEE IF THERE'S A WAY TO SWITCH IT OFF --
NO, BEN! WAIT!

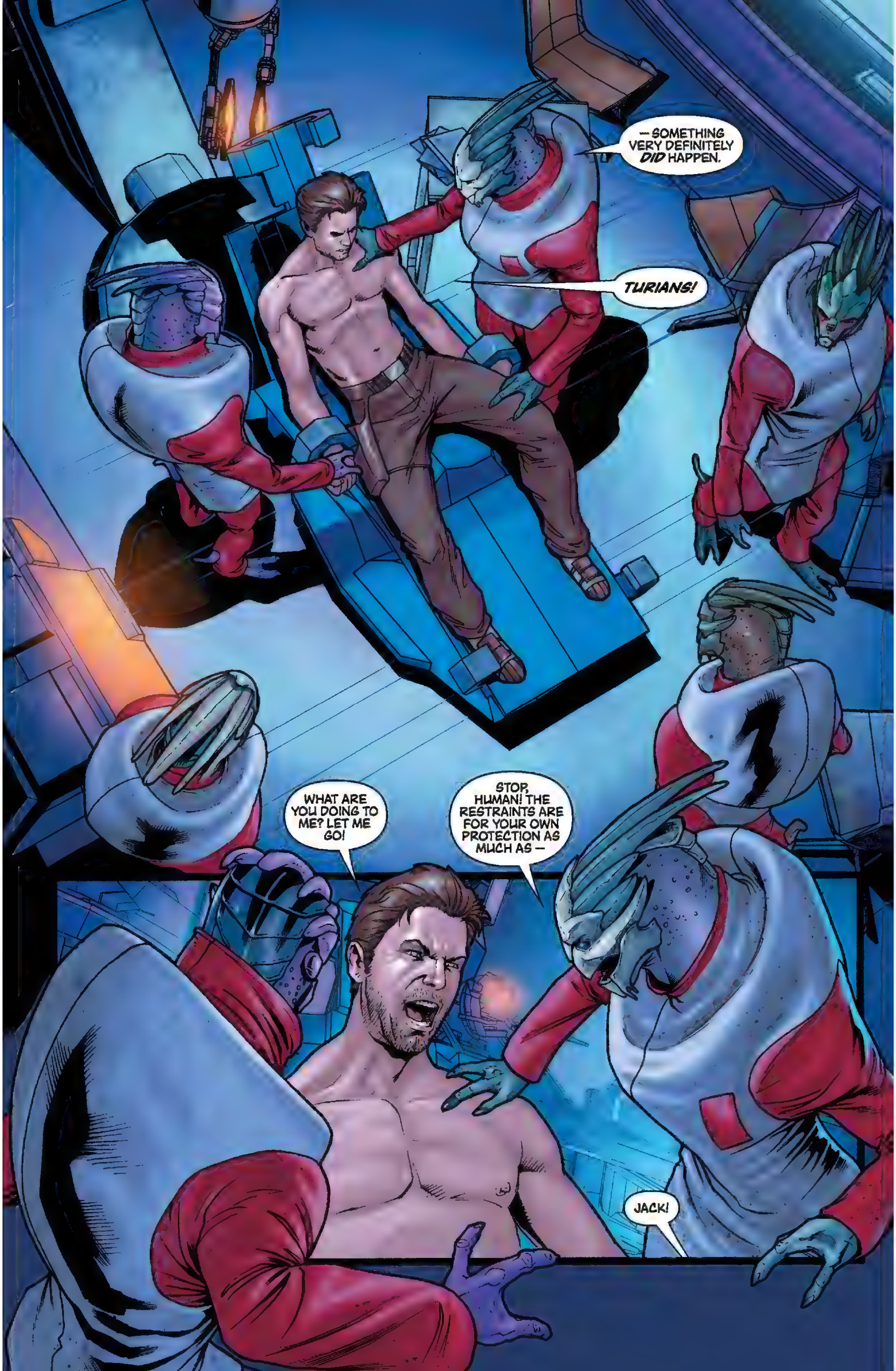

SKREEESKREEESKREEE
YARRRGGHHH!!!

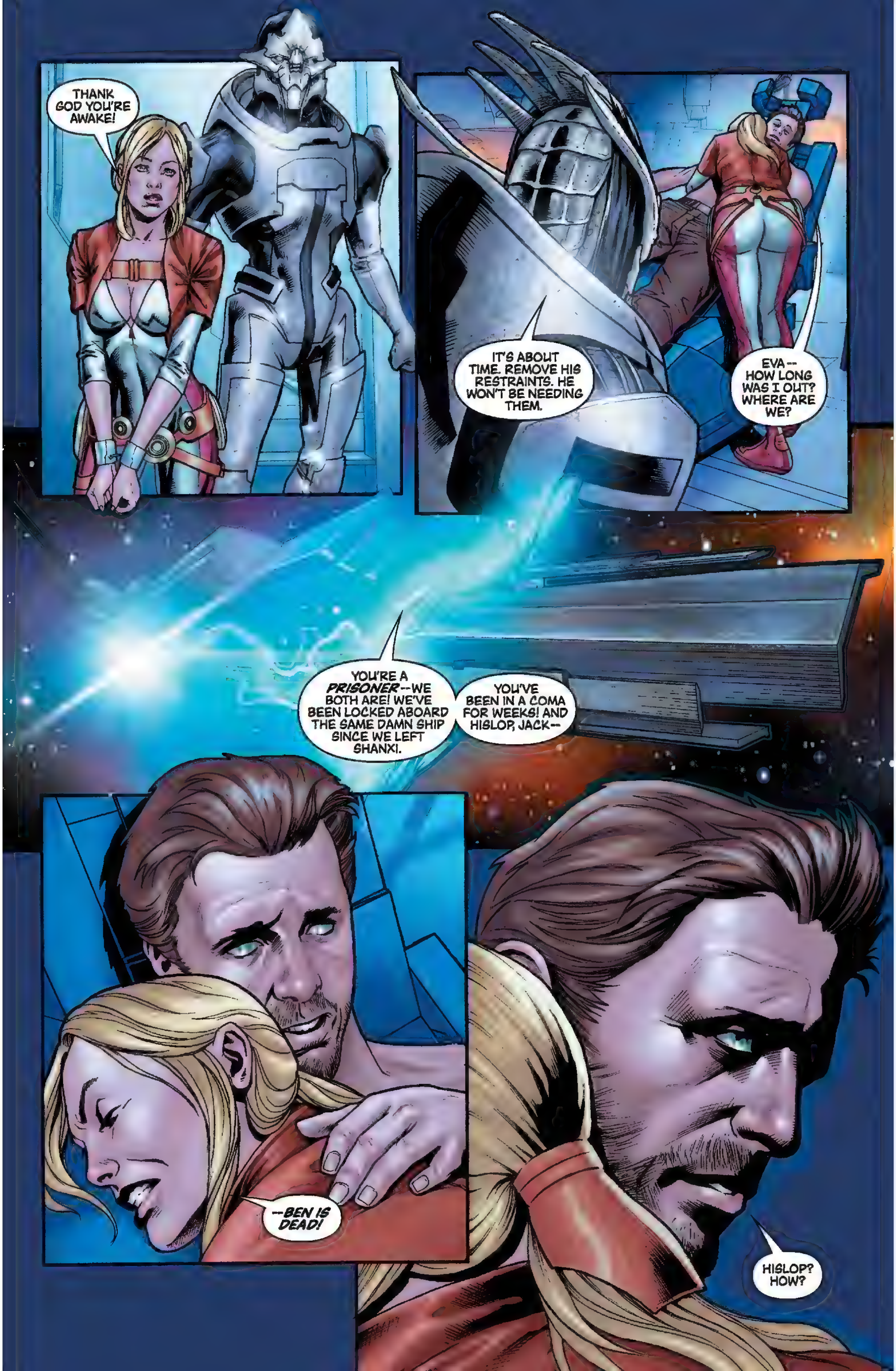

BEN! I'VE GOT —
SKREEESKREEESKREEE
UNNNHHH!!!
SKREEESKREEESKREEE
JACK! JACK!
EVA?

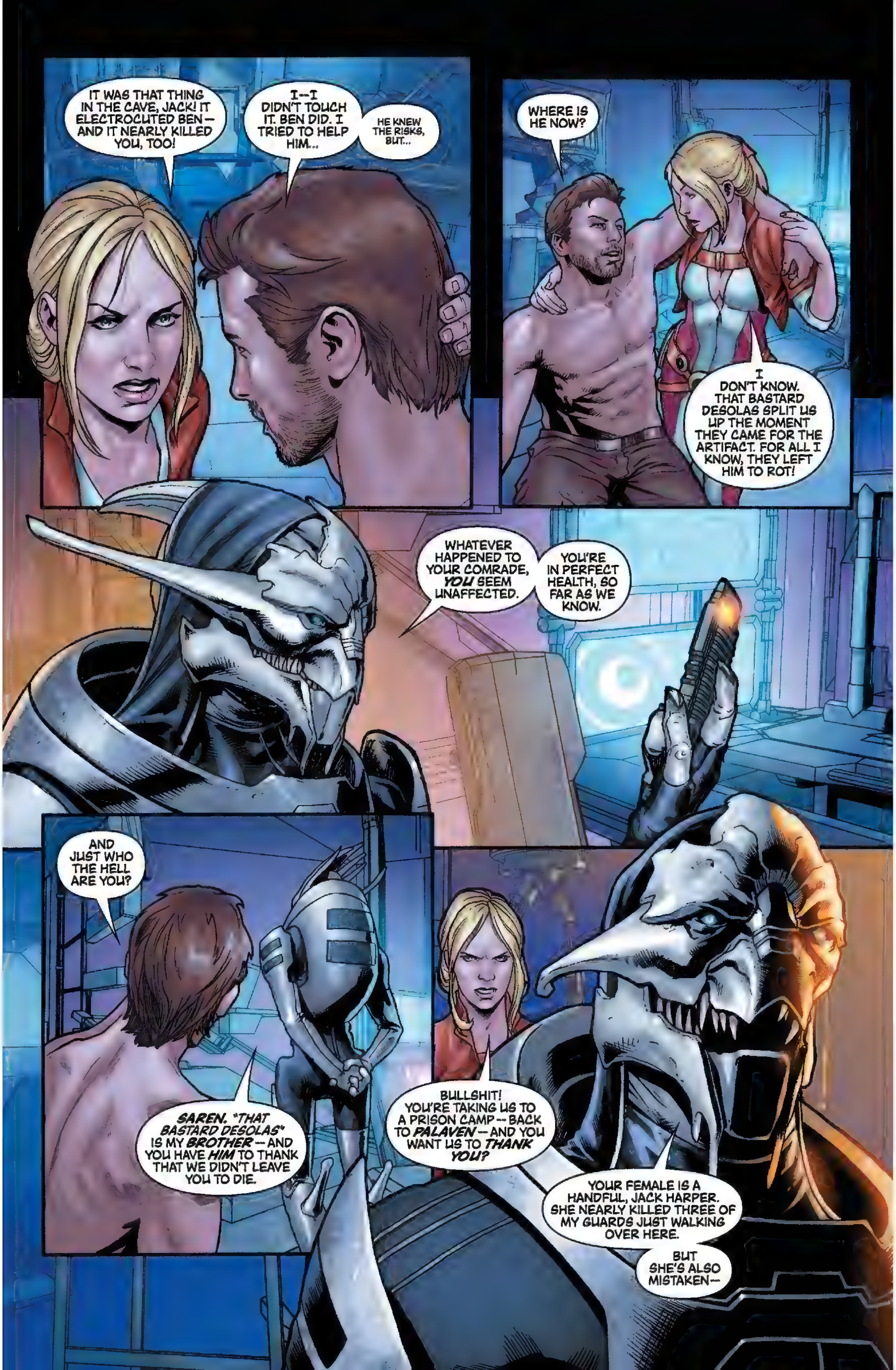

I'M SORRY, JACK! I SAW THE LIGHTS COMING FROM THE CAVE AND TRIED TO REACH YOU, AND THEY CAME UP FROM BEHIND --
WHAT...WHAT HAPPENED...
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT *I'D* LIKE TO KNOW, HUMAN -- AND IT'S WHY YOU'LL BE COMING WITH US.
LOAD THE RELIC ABOARD THE SHUTTLE -- AND BRING THE *BOY'S* CORPSE FOR DISSECTION.
YOU'VE STUDIED US -- NOW IT'S OUR TURN TO STUDY *YOU!*

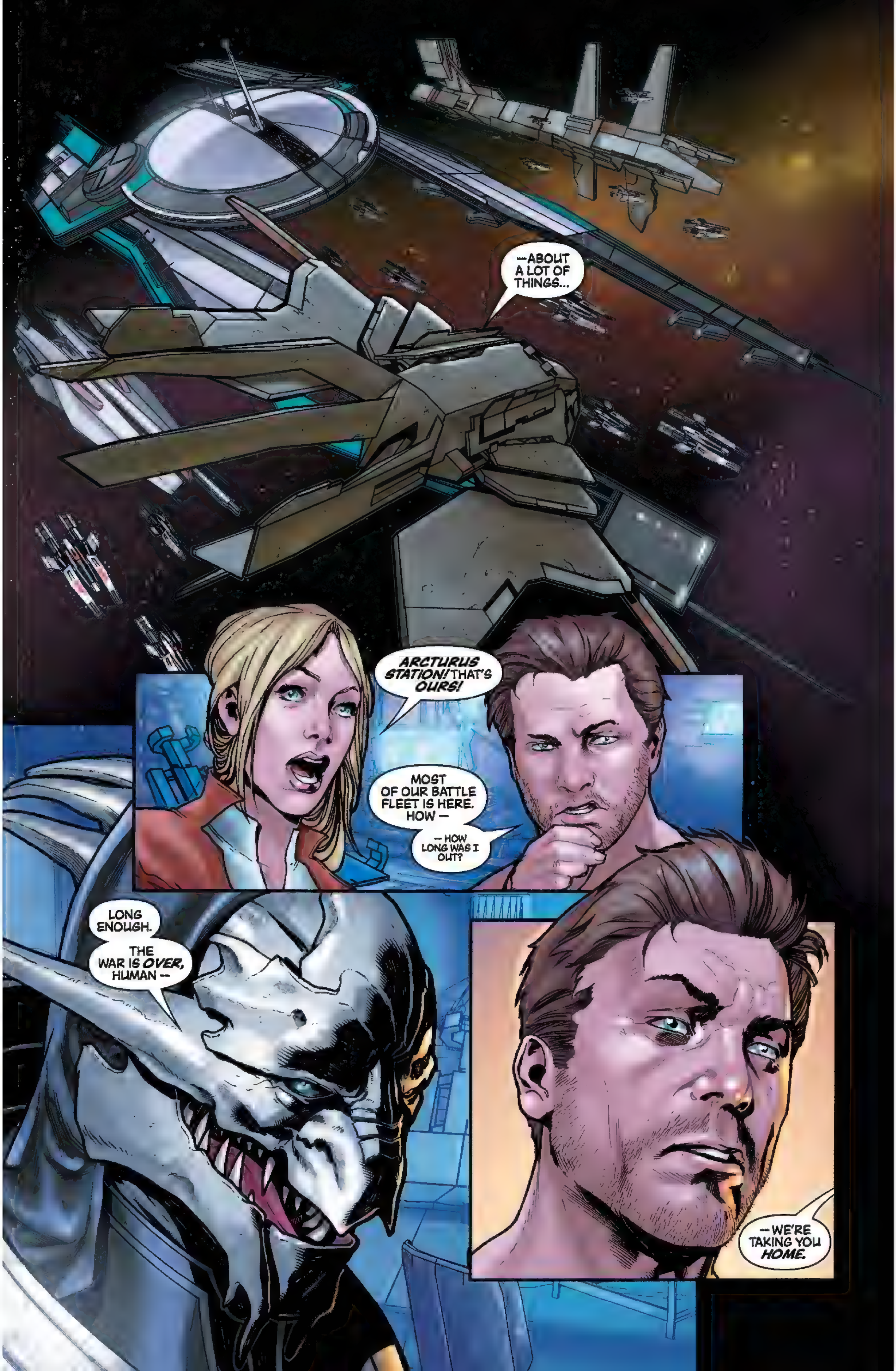

YOUR TIME IS ALMOST AT AN END.
IT IS THE WAY OF THINGS. IT IS INEVITABLE.
YOU CAN'T FIGHT IT. YOU CAN'T AVOID IT.

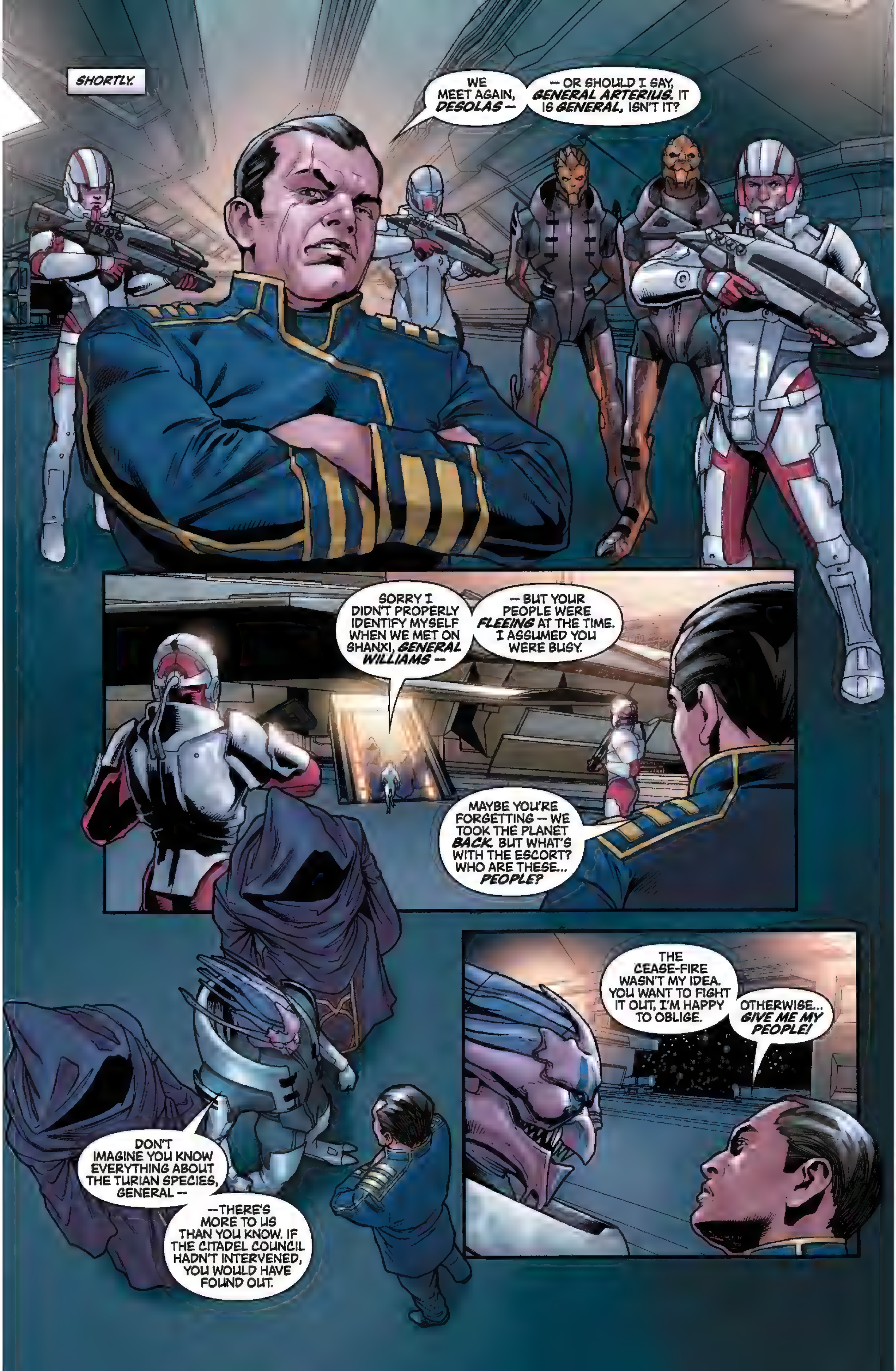

YOU HAVE BUT TWO CHOICES. YOU CAN HIDE –
– OR YOU CAN ACCEPT YOUR FATE.
WE ARE YOUR DESTINY.
NO... NO.
HE'S COMING AROUND.
EVA? BEN? SOMETHING HAPPENED...
YES, HUMAN —

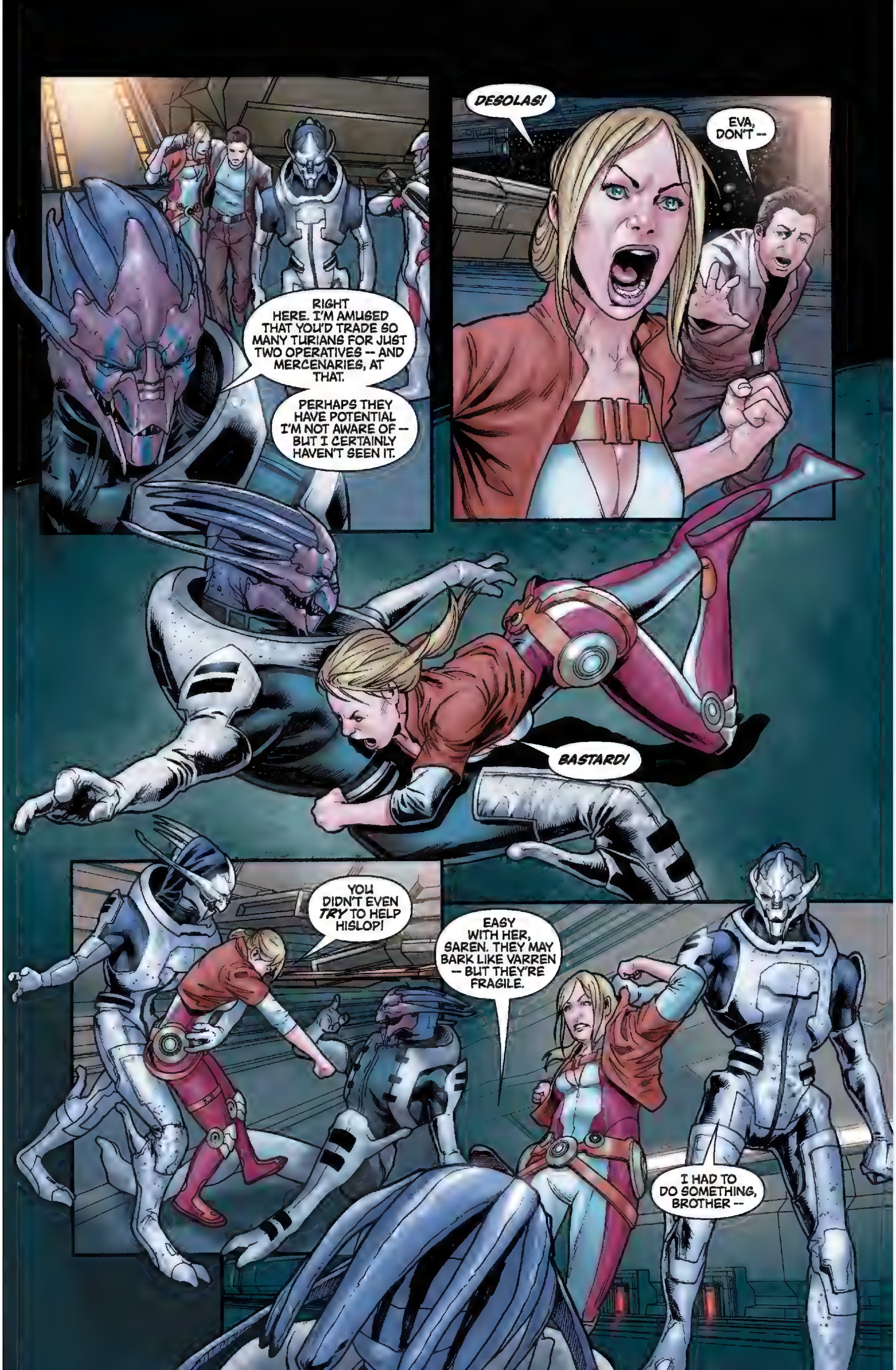

— SOMETHING VERY DEFINITELY *DID* HAPPEN.
TURIANS!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO ME? LET ME GO!
STOP, HUMAN! THE RESTRAINTS ARE FOR YOUR OWN PROTECTION AS MUCH AS —
JACK!

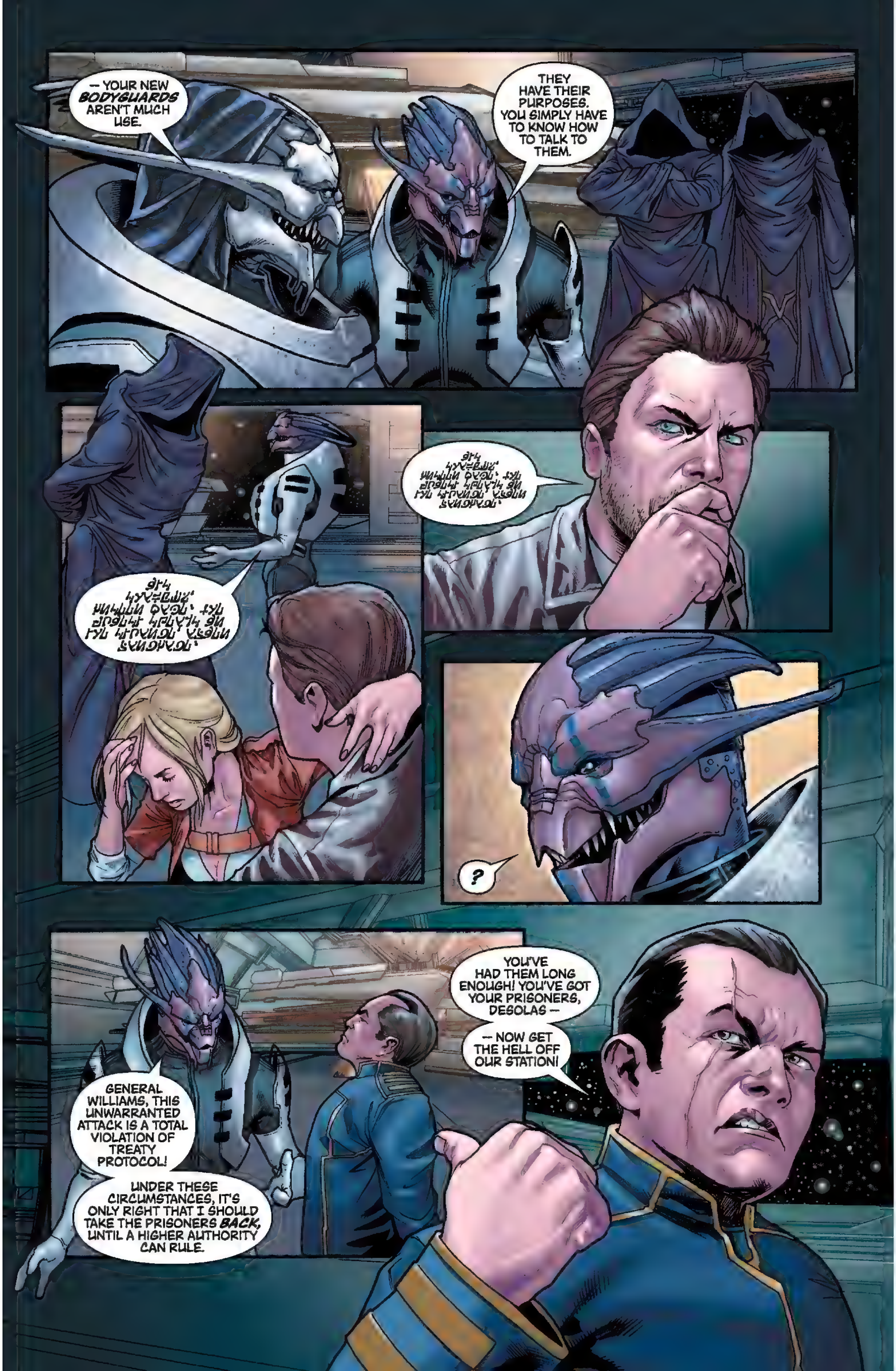

THANK GOD YOU'RE AWAKE!
IT'S ABOUT TIME. REMOVE HIS RESTRAINTS. HE WON'T BE NEEDING THEM.
EVA -- HOW LONG WAS I OUT? WHERE ARE WE?
YOU'RE A *PRISONER* -- WE BOTH ARE! WE'VE BEEN LOCKED ABOARD THE SAME DAMN SHIP SINCE WE LEFT SHANXI.
YOU'VE BEEN IN A COMA FOR WEEKS! AND HISLOP, JACK--
--BEN IS DEAD!
HISLOP? HOW?

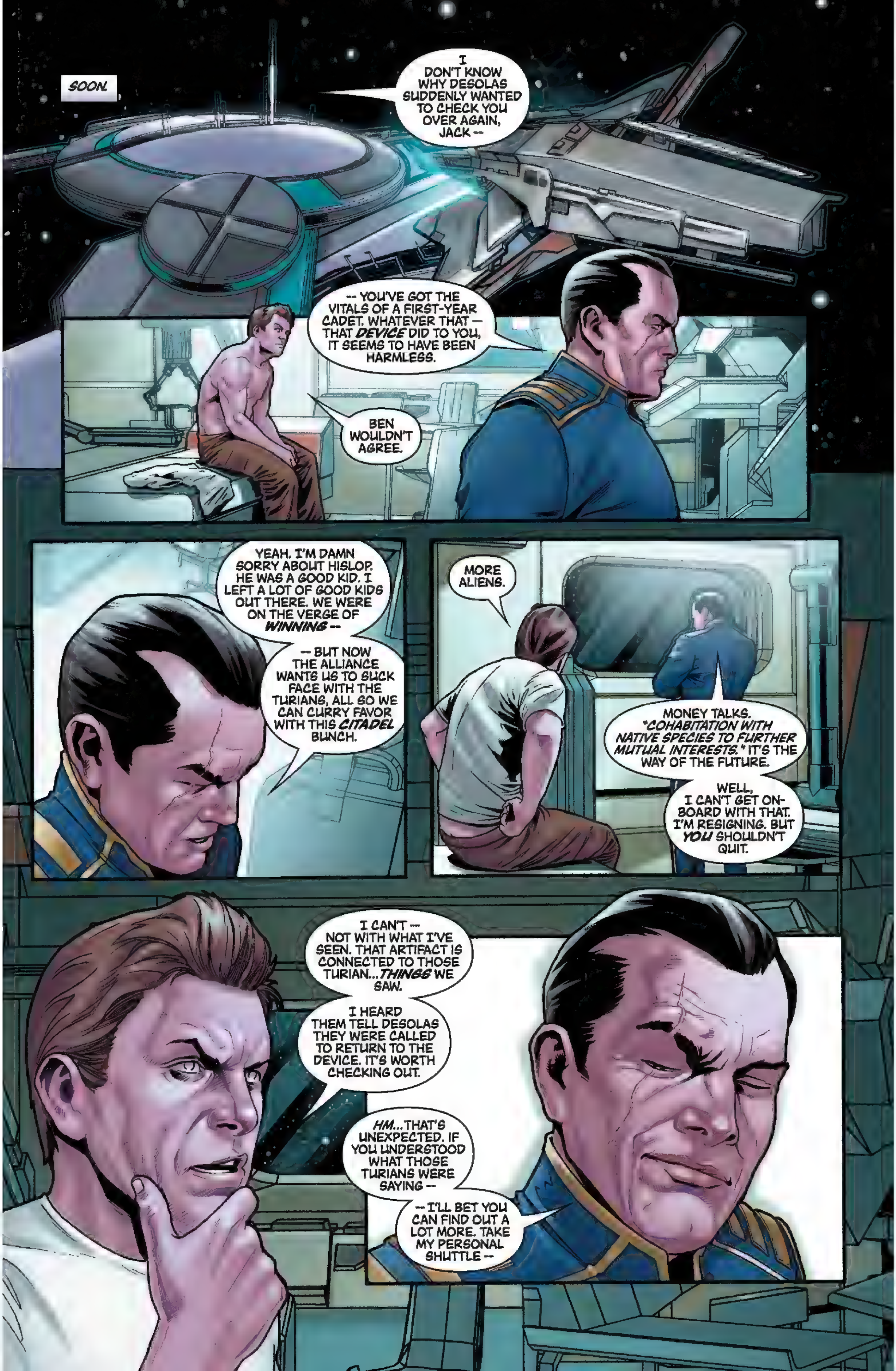

IT WAS THAT THING IN THE CAVE, JACK! IT ELECTROCUTED BEN— AND IT NEARLY KILLED YOU, TOO!
I--I DIDN'T TOUCH IT. BEN DID. I TRIED TO HELP HIM...
HE KNEW THE RISKS, BUT...
WHERE IS HE NOW?
I DON'T KNOW. THAT BASTARD DESOLAS SPLIT US UP THE MOMENT THEY CAME FOR THE ARTIFACT. FOR ALL I KNOW, THEY LEFT HIM TO ROT!
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO YOUR COMRADE, *YOU* SEEM UNAFFECTED.
YOU'RE IN PERFECT HEALTH, SO FAR AS WE KNOW.
AND JUST WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
SAREN. "THAT BASTARD DESOLAS" IS MY *BROTHER* -- AND YOU HAVE *HIM* TO THANK THAT WE DIDN'T LEAVE YOU TO DIE.
BULLSHIT! YOU'RE TAKING US TO A PRISON CAMP -- BACK TO *PALAVEN* -- AND YOU WANT US TO *THANK YOU?*
YOUR FEMALE IS A HANDFUL, JACK HARPER. SHE NEARLY KILLED THREE OF MY GUARDS JUST WALKING OVER HERE.
BUT SHE'S ALSO MISTAKEN—

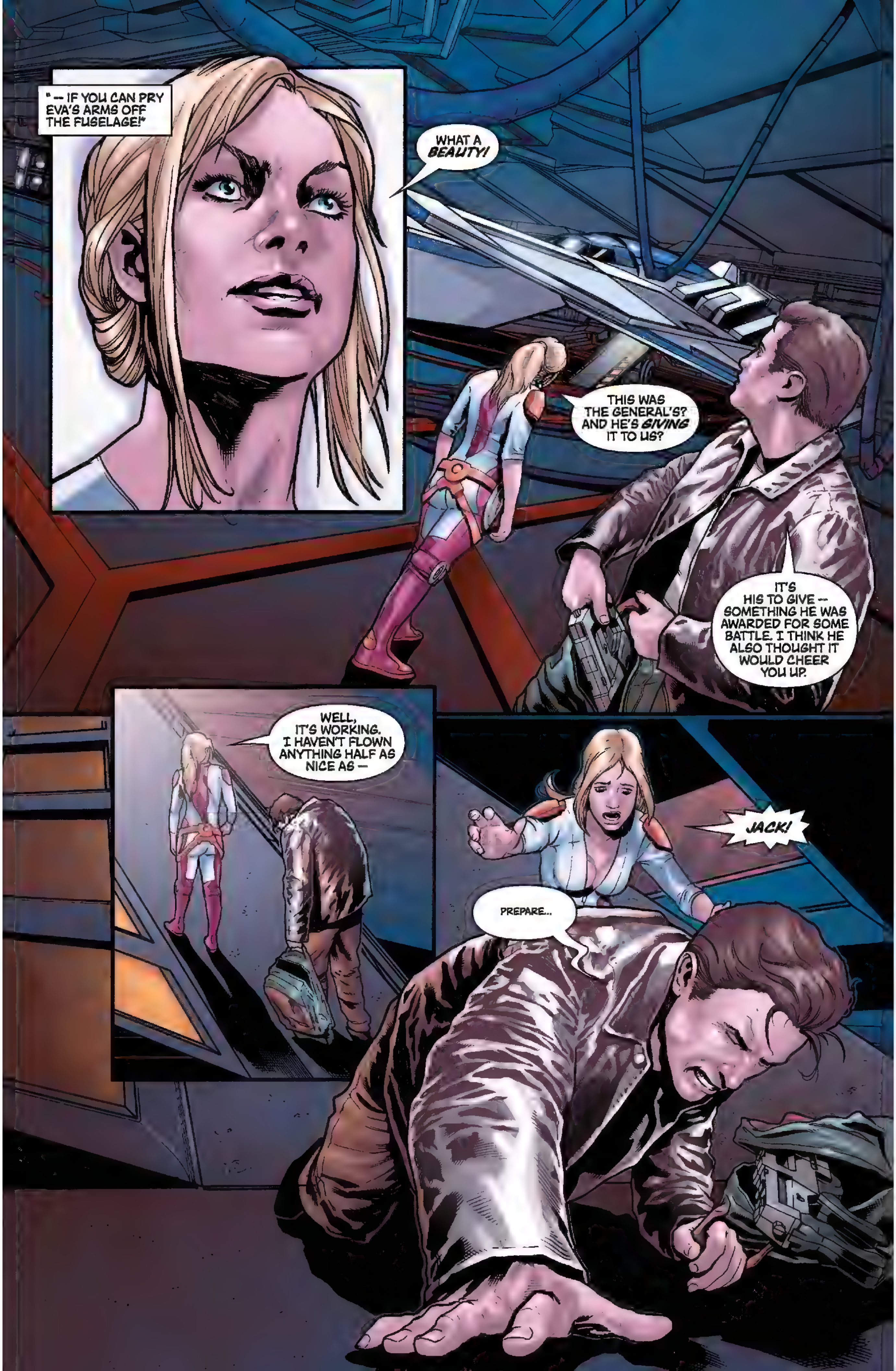

--ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS...
ARCTURUS STATION! THAT'S OURS!
MOST OF OUR BATTLE FLEET IS HERE. HOW --
-- HOW LONG WAS I OUT?
LONG ENOUGH.
THE WAR IS OVER, HUMAN --
-- WE'RE TAKING YOU HOME.

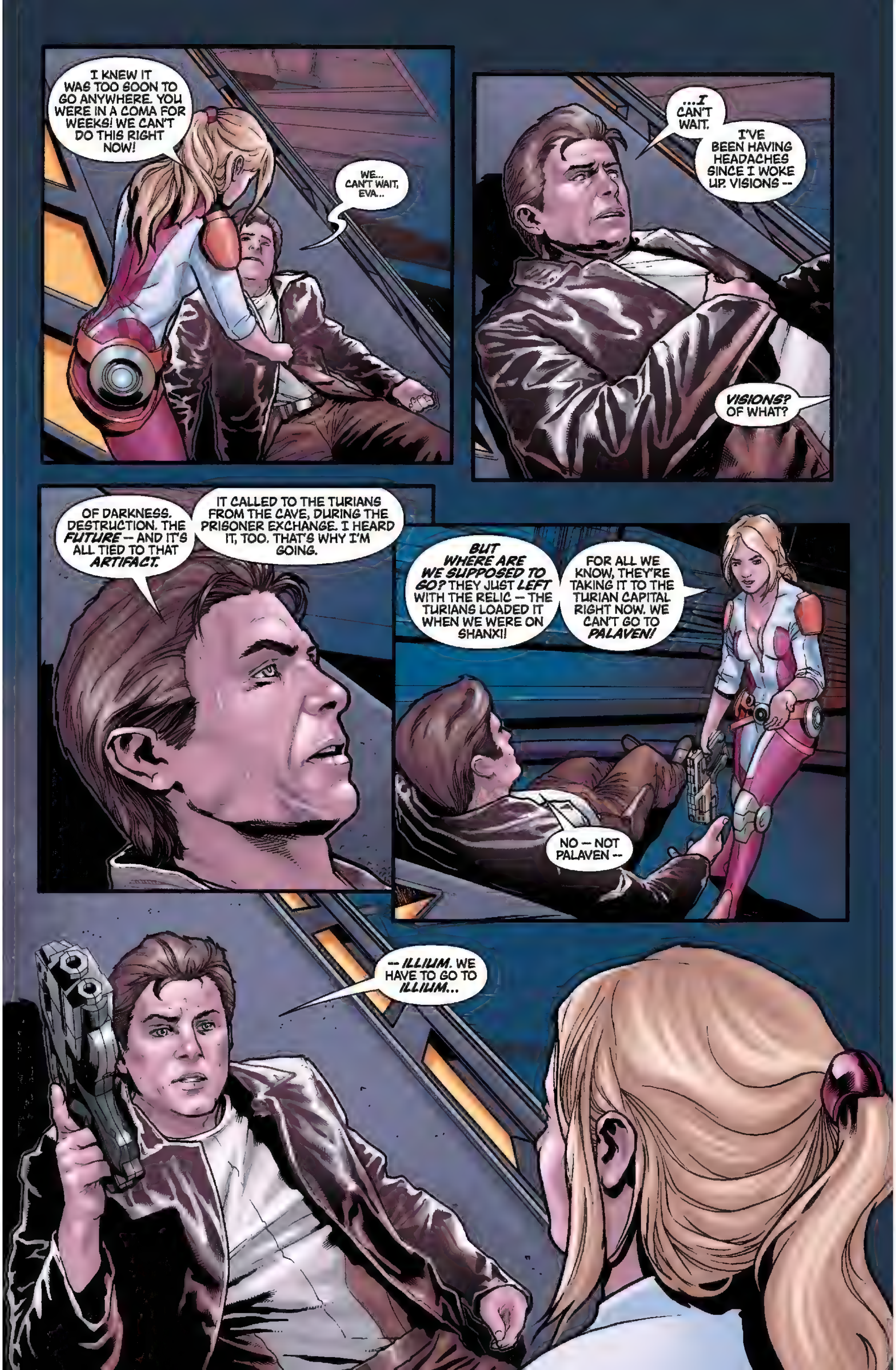

SHORTLY.
WE MEET AGAIN, DESOLAS --
-- OR SHOULD I SAY, GENERAL ARTERIUS. IT IS GENERAL, ISN'T IT?
SORRY I DIDN'T PROPERLY IDENTIFY MYSELF WHEN WE MET ON SHANXI, GENERAL WILLIAMS --
-- BUT YOUR PEOPLE WERE FLEEING AT THE TIME. I ASSUMED YOU WERE BUSY.
MAYBE YOU'RE FORGETTING -- WE TOOK THE PLANET BACK. BUT WHAT'S WITH THE ESCORT? WHO ARE THESE... PEOPLE?
DON'T IMAGINE YOU KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT THE TURIAN SPECIES, GENERAL --
--THERE'S MORE TO US THAN YOU KNOW. IF THE CITADEL COUNCIL HADN'T INTERVENED, YOU WOULD HAVE FOUND OUT.
THE CEASE-FIRE WASN'T MY IDEA. YOU WANT TO FIGHT IT OUT, I'M HAPPY TO OBLIGE.
OTHERWISE... GIVE ME MY PEOPLE!

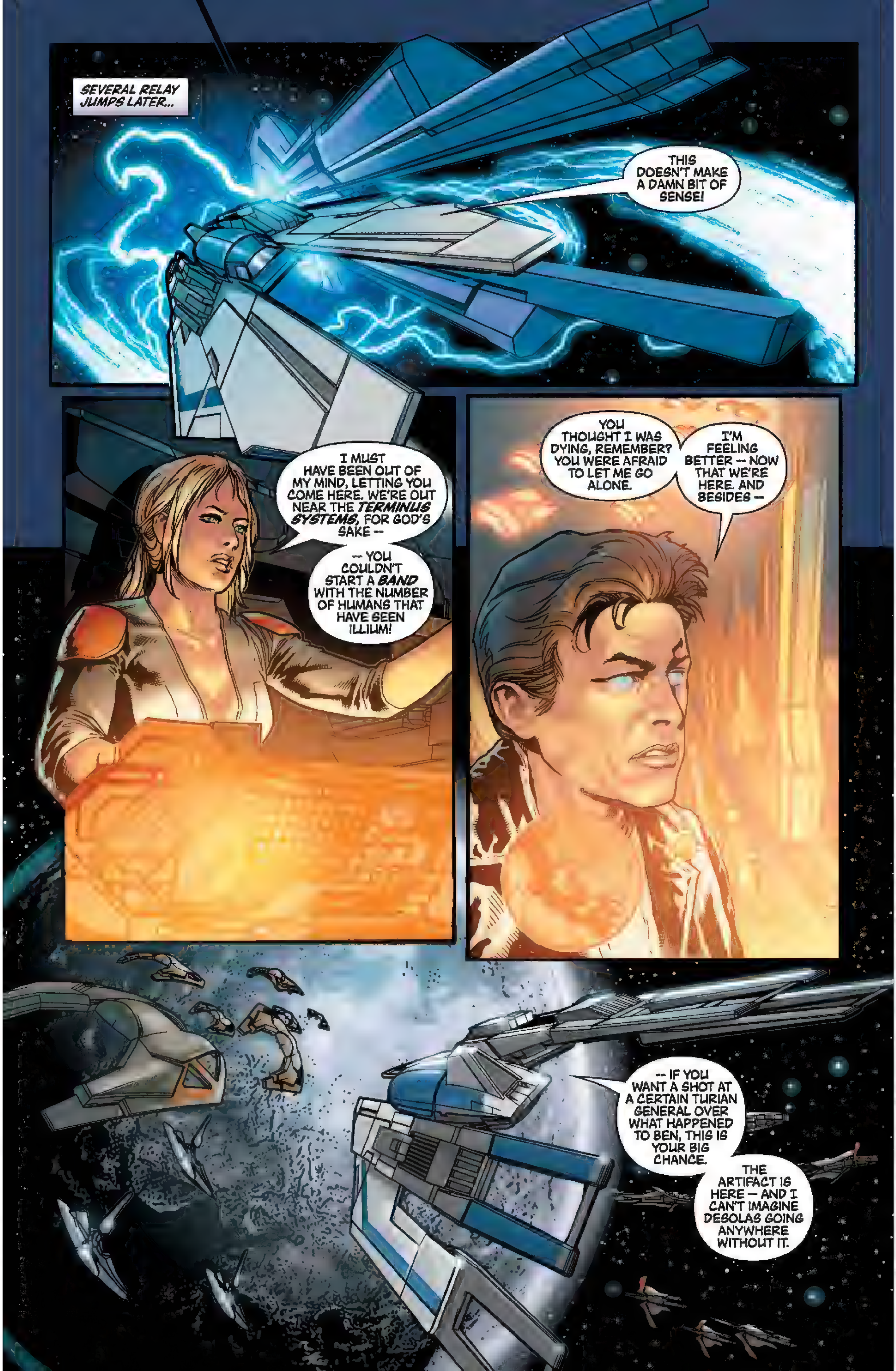

RIGHT HERE. I'M AMUSED THAT YOU'D TRADE SO MANY TURIANS FOR JUST TWO OPERATIVES -- AND MERCENARIES, AT THAT.
PERHAPS THEY HAVE POTENTIAL I'M NOT AWARE OF -- BUT I CERTAINLY HAVEN'T SEEN IT.
DESOLAS!
EVA, DON'T --
BASTARD!
YOU DIDN'T EVEN *TRY* TO HELP HISLOP!
EASY WITH HER, SAREN. THEY MAY BARK LIKE VARREN -- BUT THEY'RE FRAGILE.
I HAD TO DO SOMETHING, BROTHER --

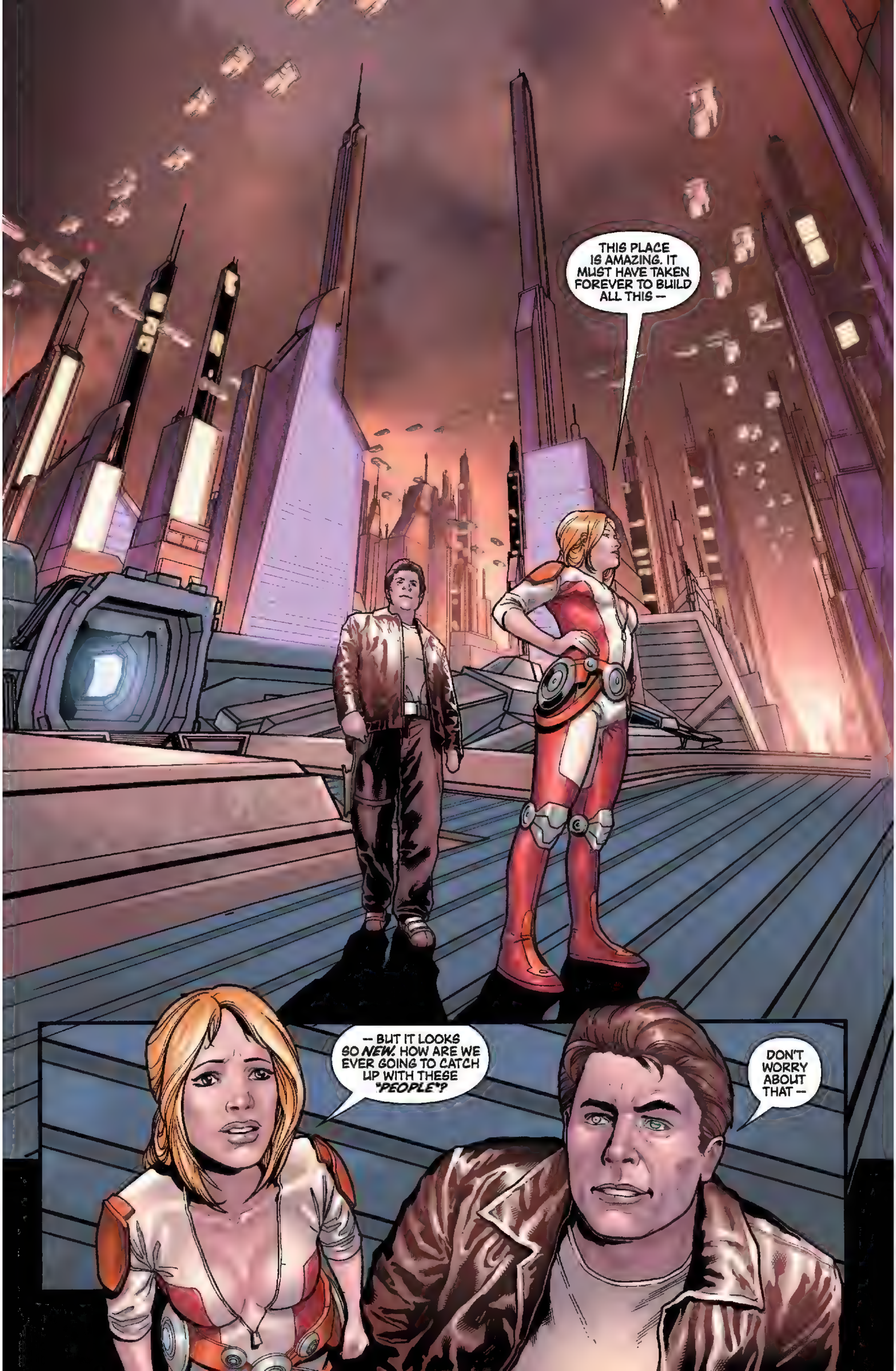

— YOUR NEW *BODYGUARDS* AREN'T MUCH USE.
THEY HAVE THEIR PURPOSES. YOU SIMPLY HAVE TO KNOW HOW TO TALK TO THEM.
?
YOU'VE HAD THEM LONG ENOUGH! YOU'VE GOT YOUR PRISONERS, DESOLAS —
— NOW GET THE HELL OFF OUR STATION!
GENERAL WILLIAMS, THIS UNWARRANTED ATTACK IS A TOTAL VIOLATION OF TREATY PROTOCOL!
UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT'S ONLY RIGHT THAT I SHOULD TAKE THE PRISONERS *BACK,* UNTIL A HIGHER AUTHORITY CAN RULE.

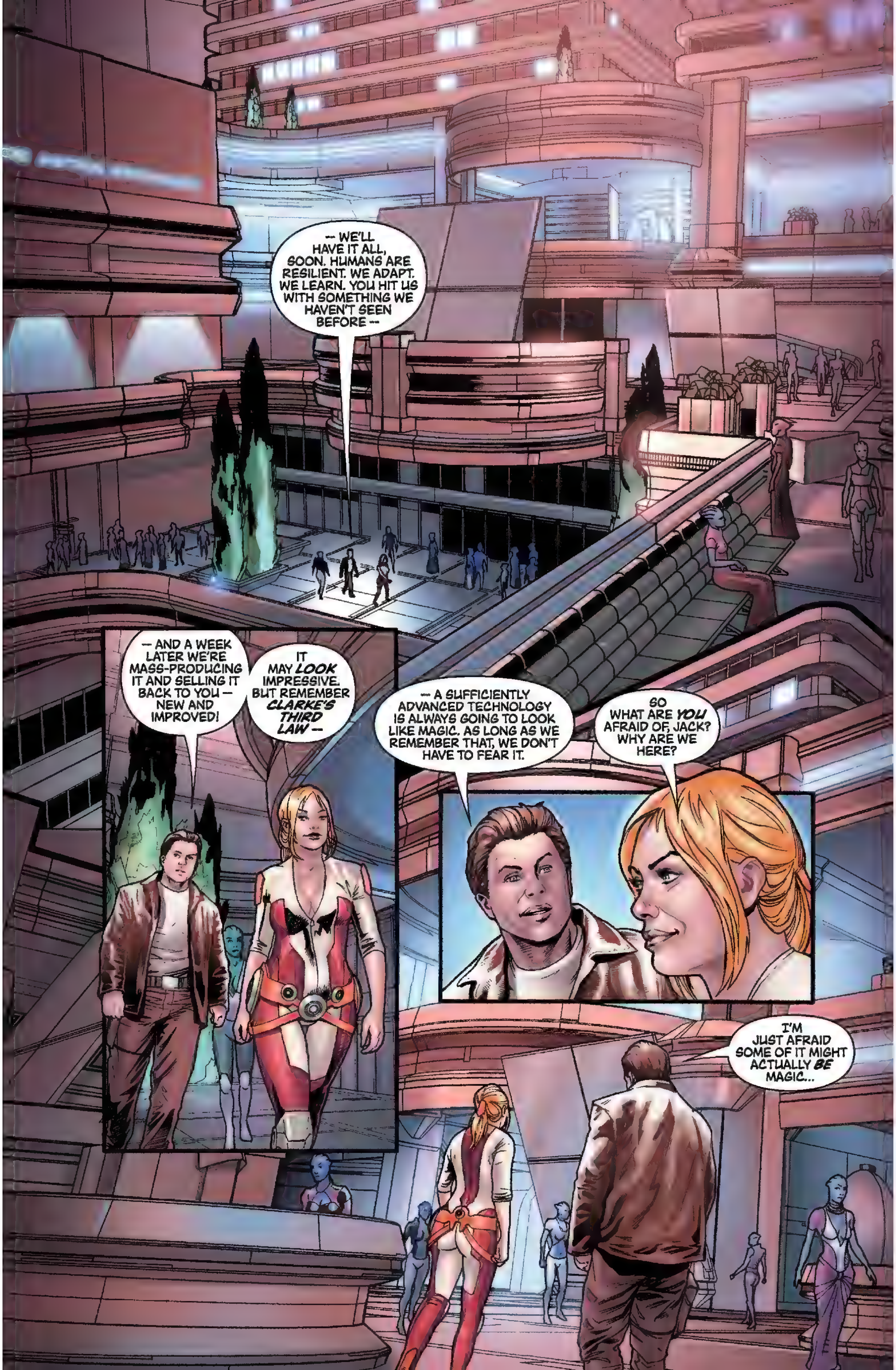

SOON.
I DON'T KNOW WHY DESOLAS SUDDENLY WANTED TO CHECK YOU OVER AGAIN, JACK --
-- YOU'VE GOT THE VITALS OF A FIRST-YEAR CADET. WHATEVER THAT -- THAT *DEVICE* DID TO YOU, IT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN HARMLESS.
BEN WOULDN'T AGREE.
YEAH. I'M DAMN SORRY ABOUT HISLOP. HE WAS A GOOD KID. I LEFT A LOT OF GOOD KIDS OUT THERE. WE WERE ON THE VERGE OF *WINNING* --
-- BUT NOW THE ALLIANCE WANTS US TO SUCK FACE WITH THE TURIANS, ALL SO WE CAN CURRY FAVOR WITH THIS *CITADEL* BUNCH.
MORE ALIENS.
MONEY TALKS. *"COHABITATION WITH NATIVE SPECIES TO FURTHER MUTUAL INTERESTS."* IT'S THE WAY OF THE FUTURE.
WELL, I CAN'T GET ON-BOARD WITH THAT. I'M RESIGNING. BUT *YOU* SHOULDN'T QUIT.
I CAN'T -- NOT WITH WHAT I'VE SEEN. THAT ARTIFACT IS CONNECTED TO THOSE TURIAN... *THINGS* WE SAW.
I HEARD THEM TELL DESOLAS THEY WERE CALLED TO RETURN TO THE DEVICE. IT'S WORTH CHECKING OUT.
HM... THAT'S UNEXPECTED. IF YOU UNDERSTOOD WHAT THOSE TURIANS WERE SAYING --
-- I'LL BET YOU CAN FIND OUT A LOT MORE. TAKE MY PERSONAL SHUTTLE --

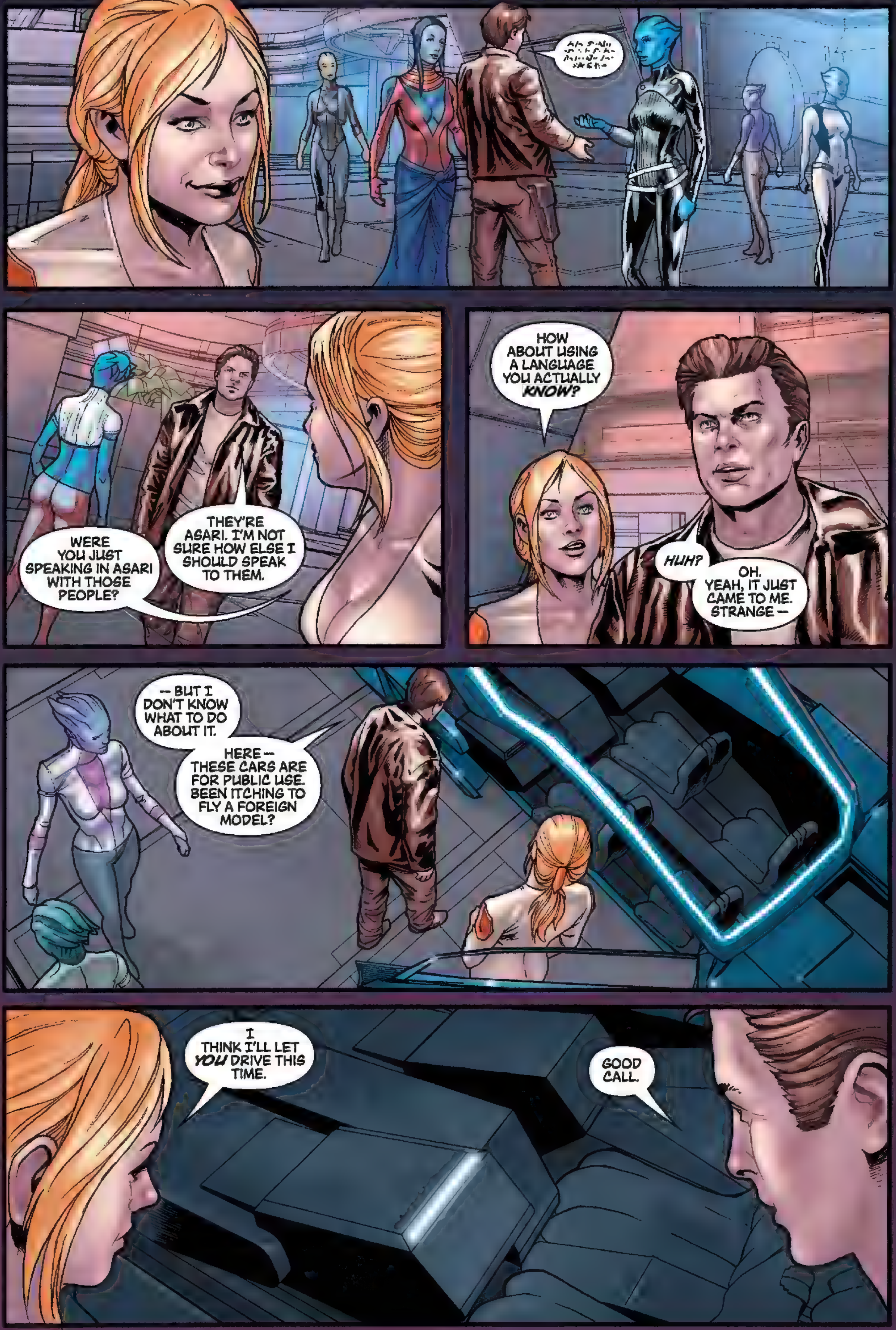

" -- IF YOU CAN PRY EVA'S ARMS OFF THE FUSELAGE!"
WHAT A *BEAUTY!*
THIS WAS THE GENERAL'S? AND HE'S *GIVING* IT TO US?
IT'S HIS TO GIVE -- SOMETHING HE WAS AWARDED FOR SOME BATTLE. I THINK HE ALSO THOUGHT IT WOULD CHEER YOU UP.
WELL, IT'S WORKING. I HAVEN'T FLOWN ANYTHING HALF AS NICE AS --
JACK!
PREPARE...

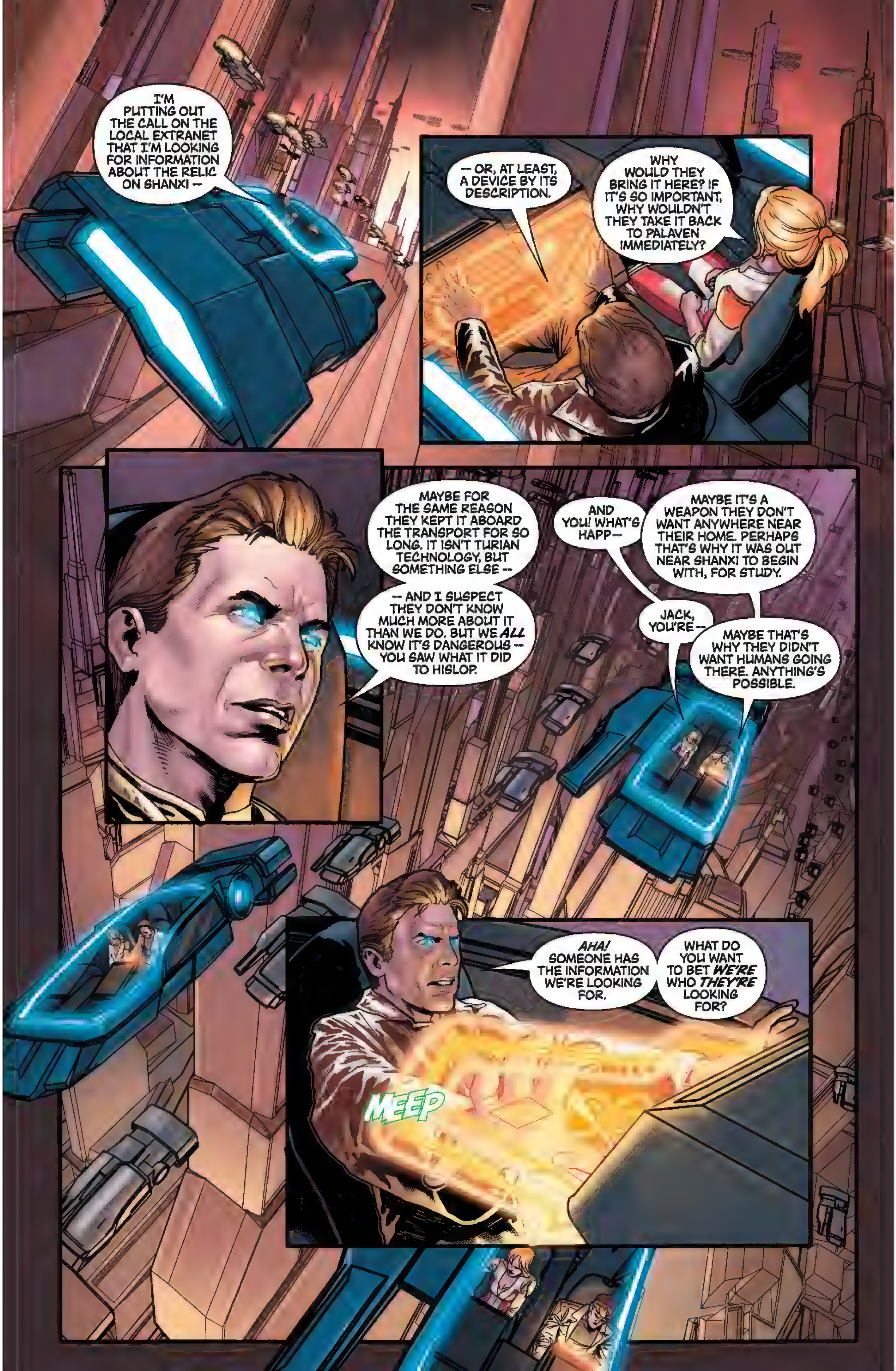

I KNEW IT WAS TOO SOON TO GO ANYWHERE. YOU WERE IN A COMA FOR WEEKS! WE CAN'T DO THIS RIGHT NOW!
WE... CAN'T WAIT, EVA...
...*I* CAN'T WAIT.
I'VE BEEN HAVING HEADACHES SINCE I WOKE UP. VISIONS --
VISIONS? OF WHAT?
OF DARKNESS. DESTRUCTION. THE *FUTURE* -- AND IT'S ALL TIED TO THAT *ARTIFACT.*
IT CALLED TO THE TURIANS FROM THE CAVE, DURING THE PRISONER EXCHANGE. I HEARD IT, TOO. THAT'S WHY I'M GOING.
BUT WHERE ARE WE SUPPOSED TO GO? THEY JUST *LEFT* WITH THE RELIC -- THE TURIANS LOADED IT WHEN WE WERE ON SHANXI!
FOR ALL WE KNOW, THEY'RE TAKING IT TO THE TURIAN CAPITAL RIGHT NOW. WE CAN'T GO TO *PALAVEN!*
NO -- NOT PALAVEN --
-- *ILLIUM*. WE HAVE TO GO TO *ILLIUM*...

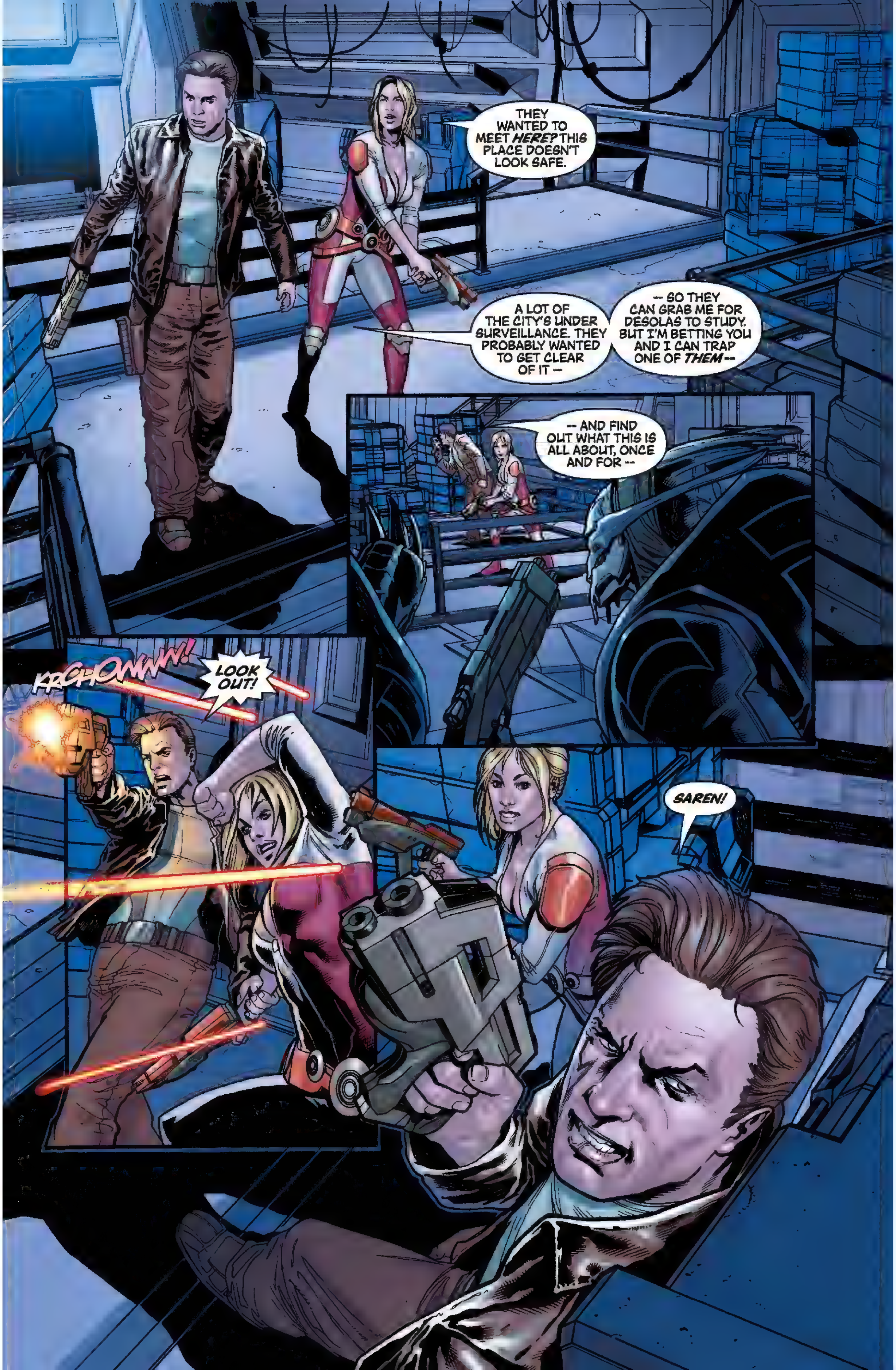

SEVERAL RELAY JUMPS LATER...
THIS DOESN'T MAKE A DAMN BIT OF SENSE!
I MUST HAVE BEEN OUT OF MY MIND, LETTING YOU COME HERE. WE'RE OUT NEAR THE *TERMINUS SYSTEMS,* FOR GOD'S SAKE --
-- YOU COULDN'T START A *BAND* WITH THE NUMBER OF HUMANS THAT HAVE SEEN ILLIUM!
YOU THOUGHT I WAS DYING, REMEMBER? YOU WERE AFRAID TO LET ME GO ALONE.
I'M FEELING BETTER -- NOW THAT WE'RE HERE. AND BESIDES --
-- IF YOU WANT A SHOT AT A CERTAIN TURIAN GENERAL OVER WHAT HAPPENED TO BEN, THIS IS YOUR BIG CHANCE.
THE ARTIFACT IS HERE -- AND I CAN'T IMAGINE DESOLAS GOING ANYWHERE WITHOUT IT.

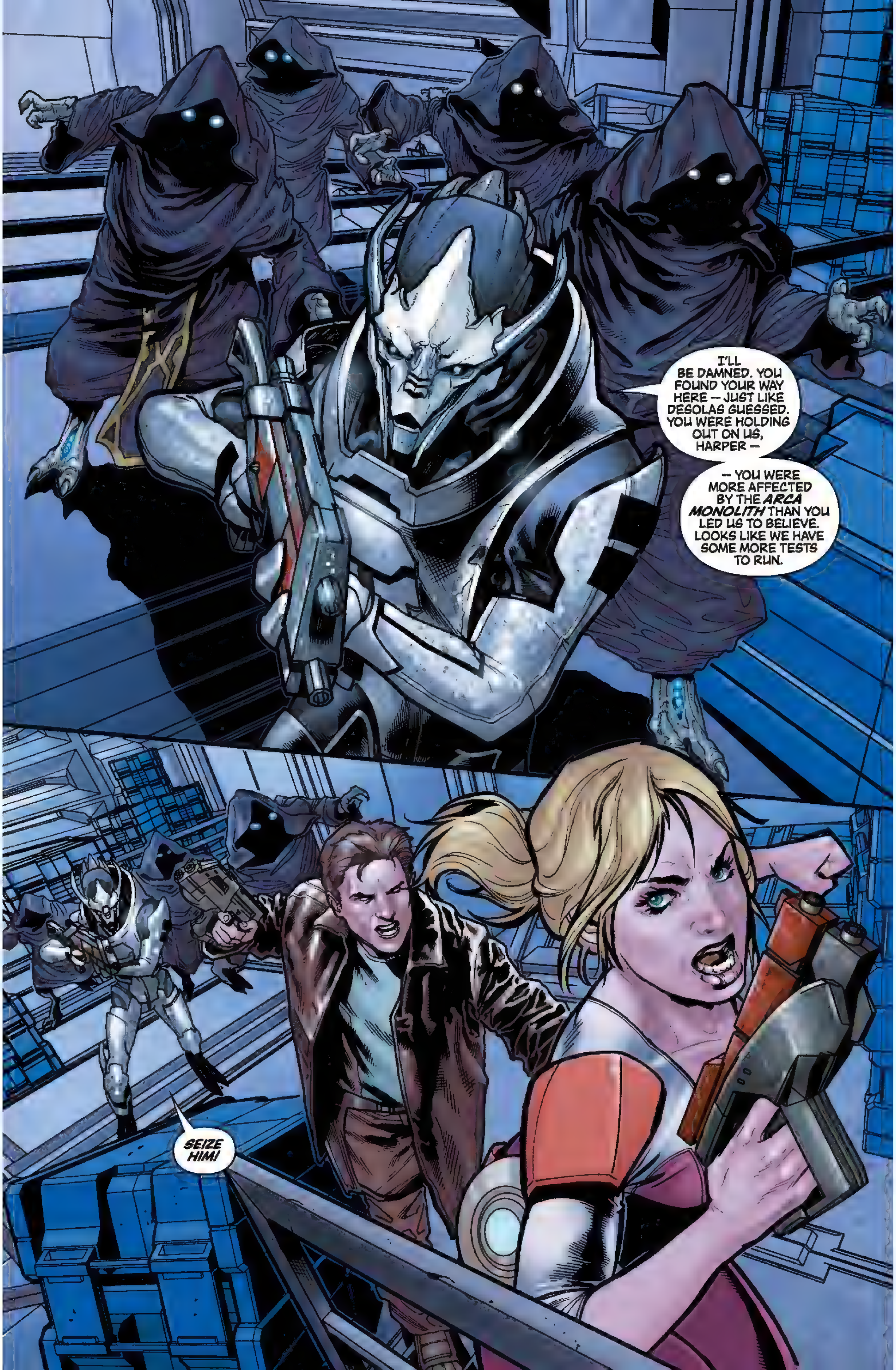

THIS PLACE IS AMAZING. IT MUST HAVE TAKEN FOREVER TO BUILD ALL THIS --
-- BUT IT LOOKS SO *NEW.* HOW ARE WE EVER GOING TO CATCH UP WITH THESE *"PEOPLE"*?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT --

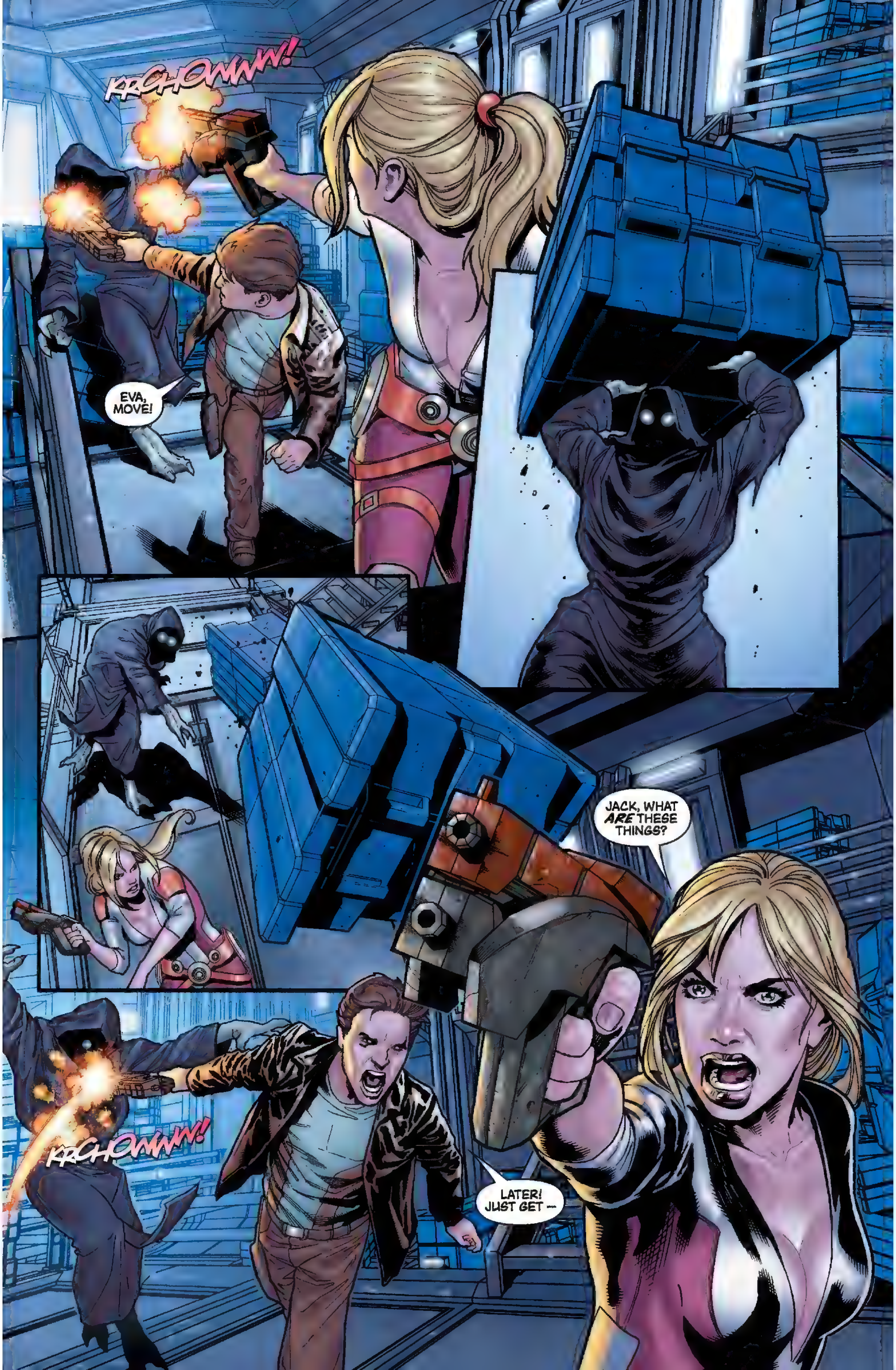

-- WE'LL HAVE IT ALL, SOON. HUMANS ARE RESILIENT. WE ADAPT. WE LEARN. YOU HIT US WITH SOMETHING WE HAVEN'T SEEN BEFORE --
-- AND A WEEK LATER WE'RE MASS-PRODUCING IT AND SELLING IT BACK TO YOU -- NEW AND IMPROVED!
IT MAY *LOOK* IMPRESSIVE. BUT REMEMBER *CLARKE'S THIRD LAW* --
-- A SUFFICIENTLY ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY IS ALWAYS GOING TO LOOK LIKE MAGIC. AS LONG AS WE REMEMBER THAT, WE DON'T HAVE TO FEAR IT.
SO WHAT ARE *YOU* AFRAID OF, JACK? WHY ARE WE HERE?
I'M JUST AFRAID SOME OF IT MIGHT ACTUALLY *BE* MAGIC...

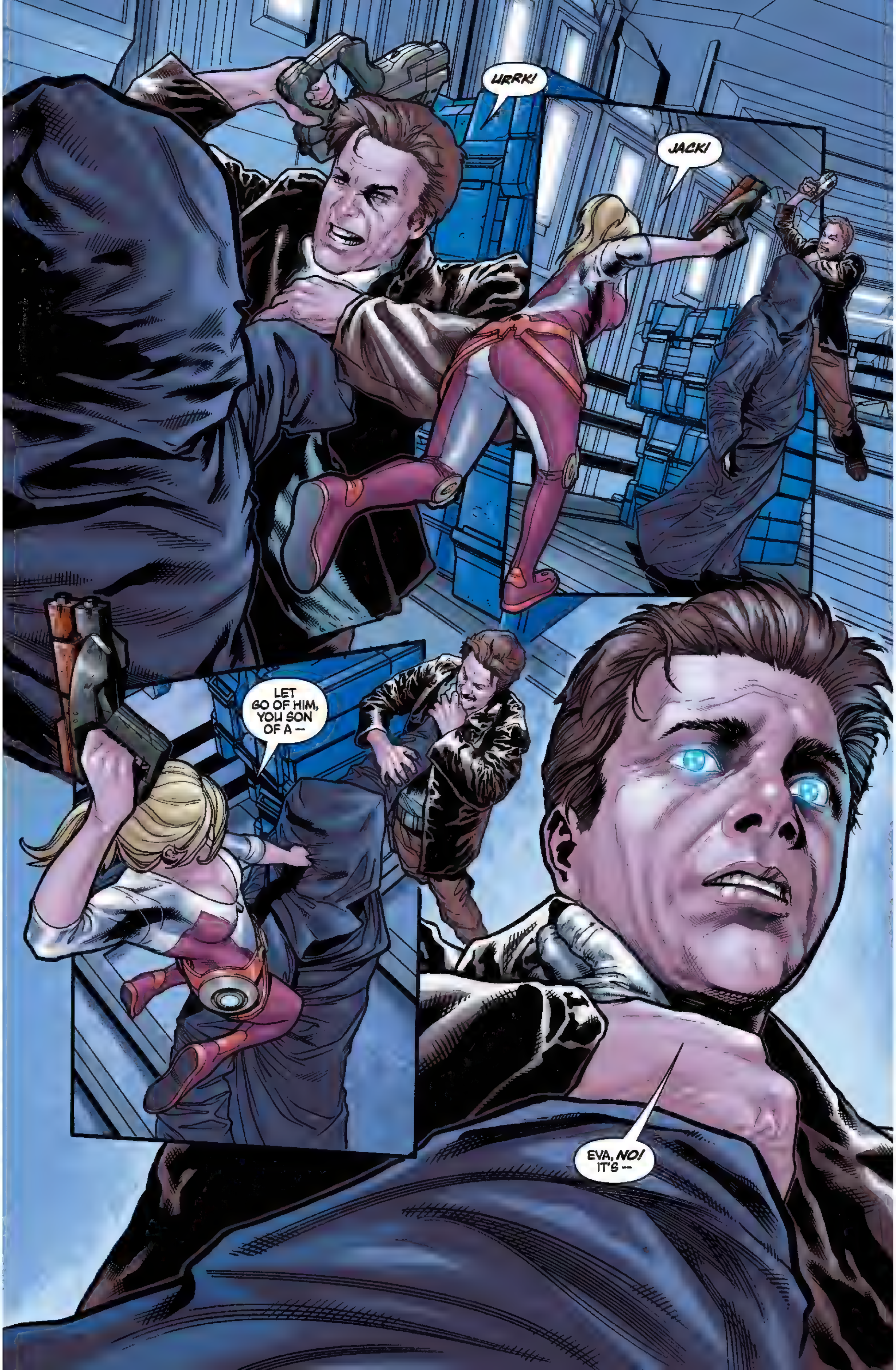

WERE YOU JUST SPEAKING IN ASARI WITH THOSE PEOPLE?
THEY'RE ASARI. I'M NOT SURE HOW ELSE I SHOULD SPEAK TO THEM.
HOW ABOUT USING A LANGUAGE YOU ACTUALLY *KNOW?*
HUH?
OH. YEAH, IT JUST CAME TO ME. STRANGE --
-- BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT.
HERE -- THESE CARS ARE FOR PUBLIC USE. BEEN ITCHING TO FLY A FOREIGN MODEL?
I THINK I'LL LET *YOU* DRIVE THIS TIME.
GOOD CALL.

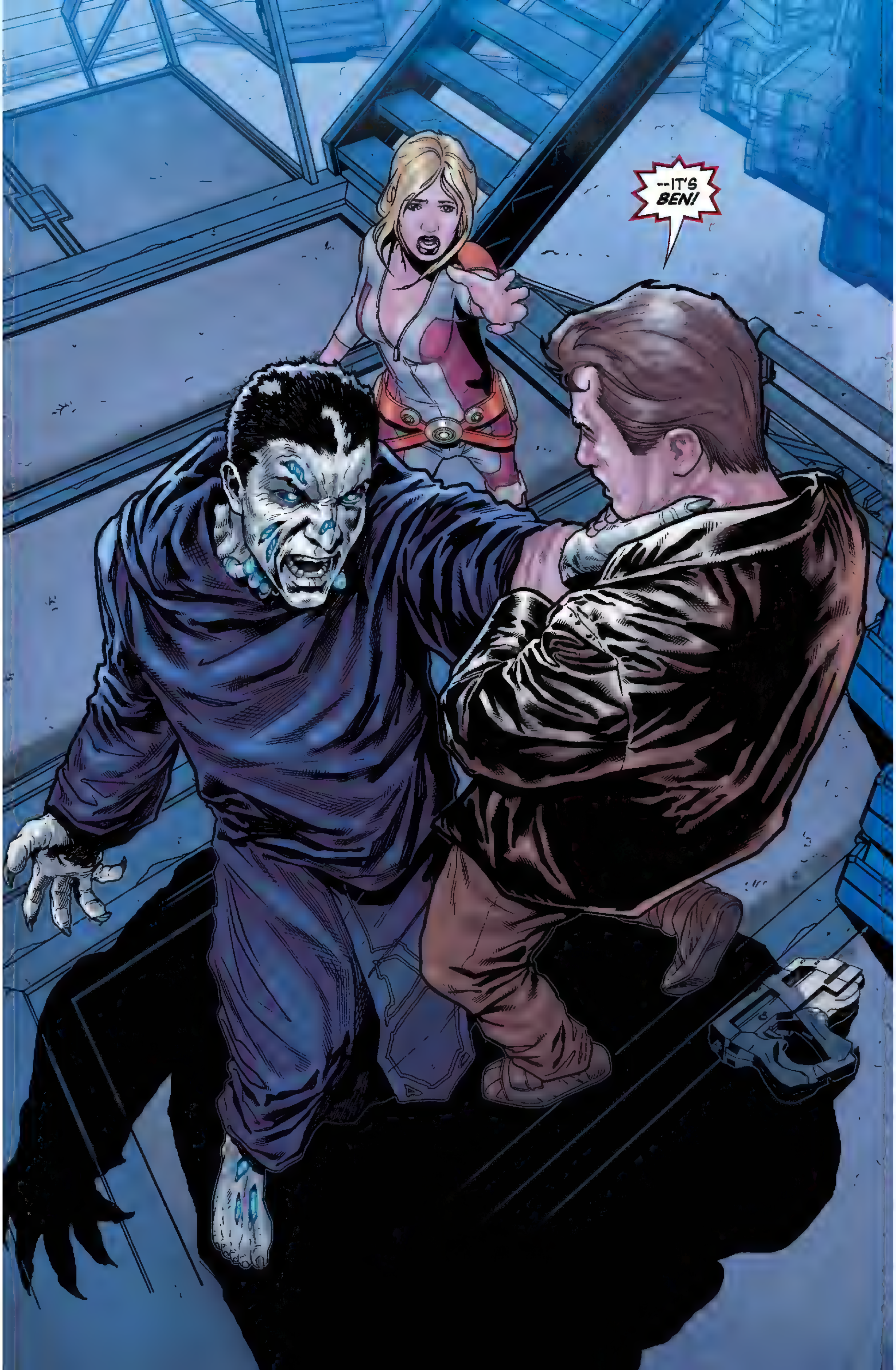

I'M PUTTING OUT THE CALL ON THE LOCAL EXTRANET THAT I'M LOOKING FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE RELIC ON SHANXI --
-- OR, AT LEAST, A DEVICE BY ITS DESCRIPTION.
WHY WOULD THEY BRING IT HERE? IF IT'S SO IMPORTANT, WHY WOULDN'T THEY TAKE IT BACK TO PALAVEN IMMEDIATELY?
MAYBE FOR THE SAME REASON THEY KEPT IT ABOARD THE TRANSPORT FOR SO LONG. IT ISN'T TURIAN TECHNOLOGY, BUT SOMETHING ELSE --
-- AND I SUSPECT THEY DON'T KNOW MUCH MORE ABOUT IT THAN WE DO. BUT WE *ALL* KNOW IT'S DANGEROUS -- YOU SAW WHAT IT DID TO HISLOP.
MAYBE IT'S A WEAPON THEY DON'T WANT ANYWHERE NEAR THEIR HOME. PERHAPS THAT'S WHY IT WAS OUT NEAR SHANXI TO BEGIN WITH, FOR STUDY.
AND YOU! WHAT'S HAPP--
JACK, YOU'RE --
MAYBE THAT'S WHY THEY DIDN'T WANT HUMANS GOING THERE. ANYTHING'S POSSIBLE.
AHA! SOMEONE HAS THE INFORMATION WE'RE LOOKING FOR.
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BET *WE'RE* WHO *THEY'RE* LOOKING FOR?
MEEP

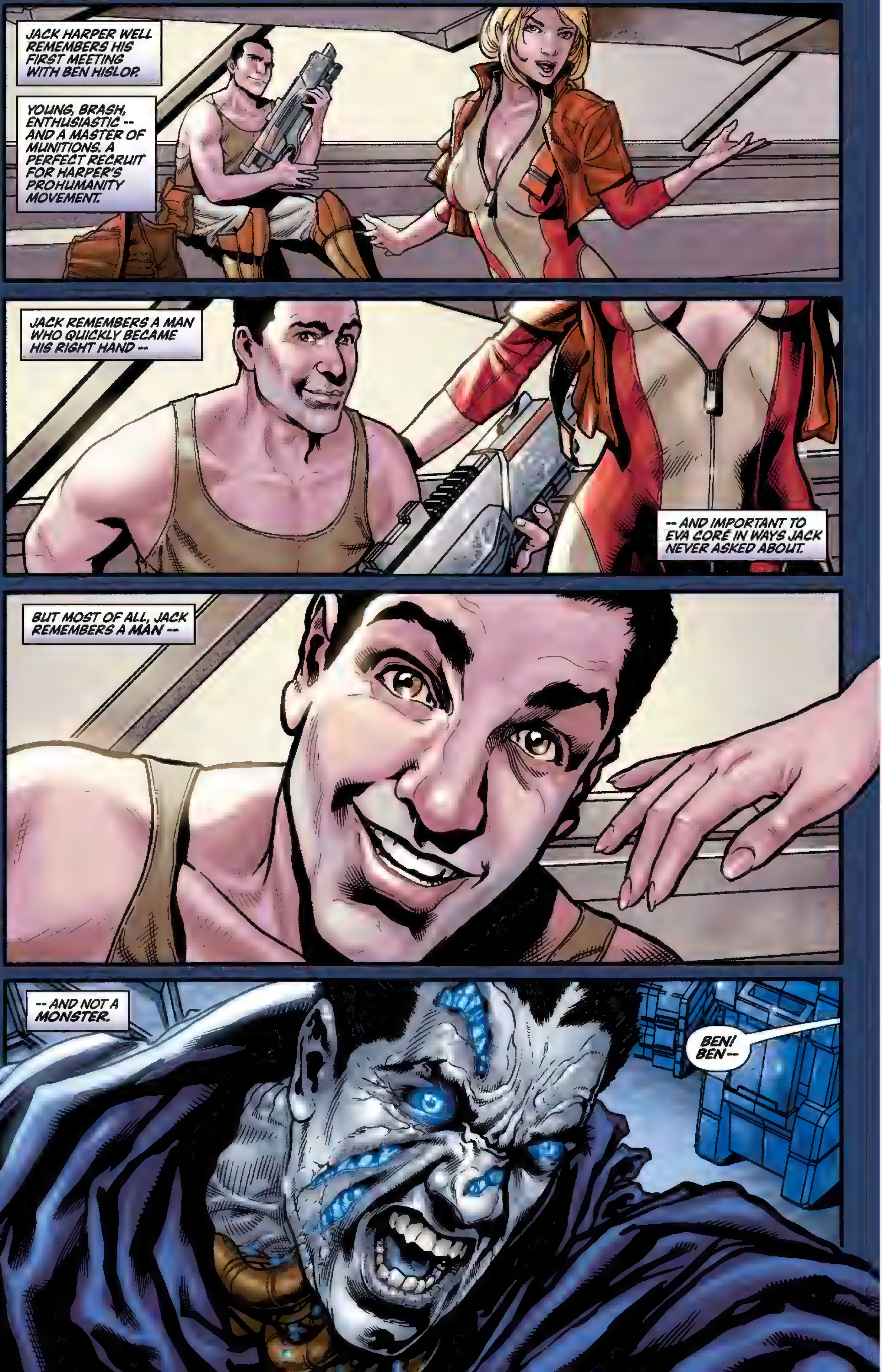

THEY WANTED TO MEET *HERE?* THIS PLACE DOESN'T LOOK SAFE.
A LOT OF THE CITY'S UNDER SURVEILLANCE. THEY PROBABLY WANTED TO GET CLEAR OF IT --
-- SO THEY CAN GRAB ME FOR DESOLAS TO STUDY. BUT I'M BETTING YOU AND I CAN TRAP ONE OF *THEM* --
-- AND FIND OUT WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT, ONCE AND FOR --
KRCHOWWW!
LOOK OUT!
SAREN!

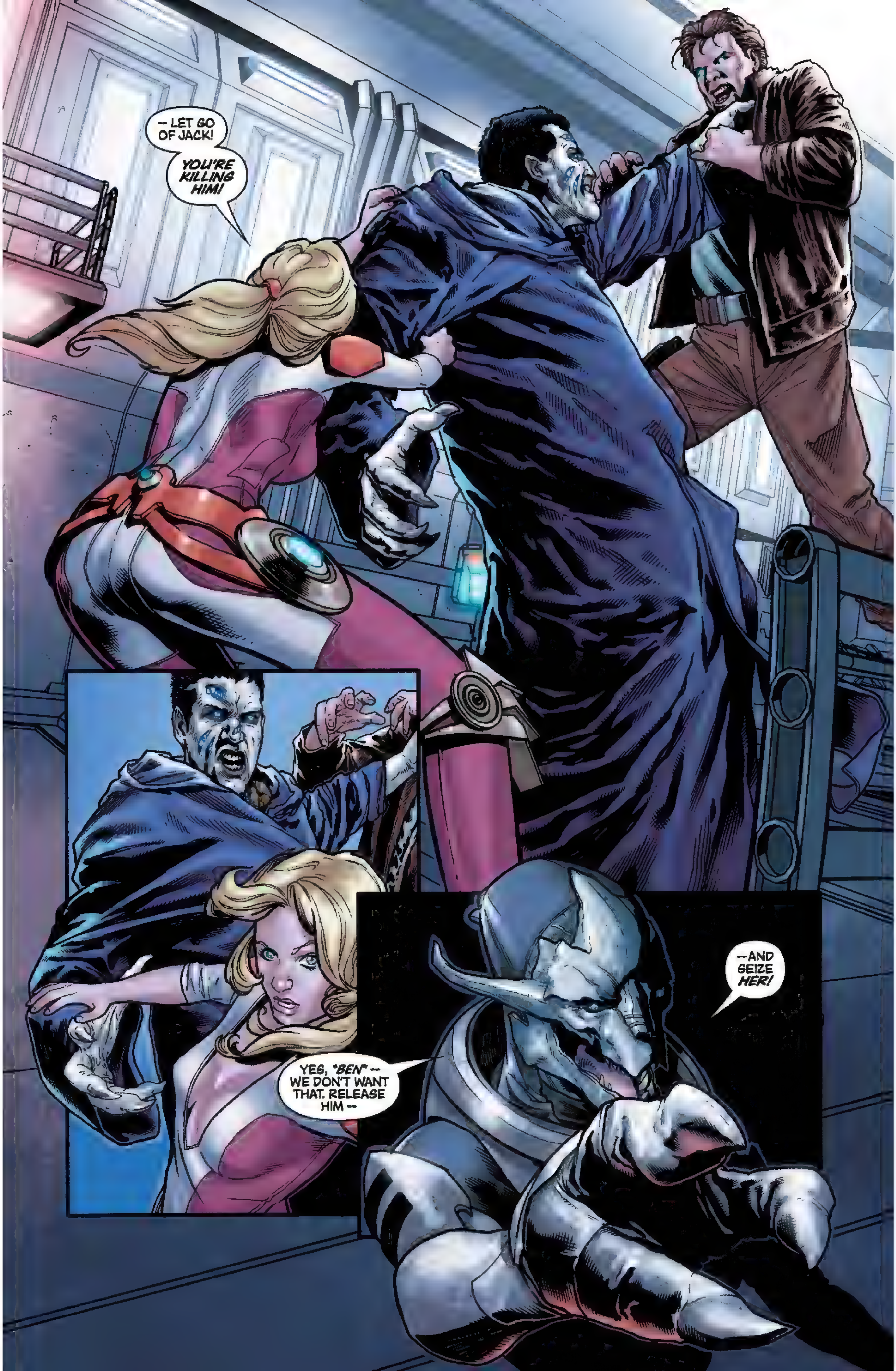

I'LL BE DAMNED. YOU FOUND YOUR WAY HERE -- JUST LIKE DESOLAS GUESSED. YOU WERE HOLDING OUT ON US, HARPER --
-- YOU WERE MORE AFFECTED BY THE *ARCA MONOLITH* THAN YOU LED US TO BELIEVE. LOOKS LIKE WE HAVE SOME MORE TESTS TO RUN.
SEIZE HIM!

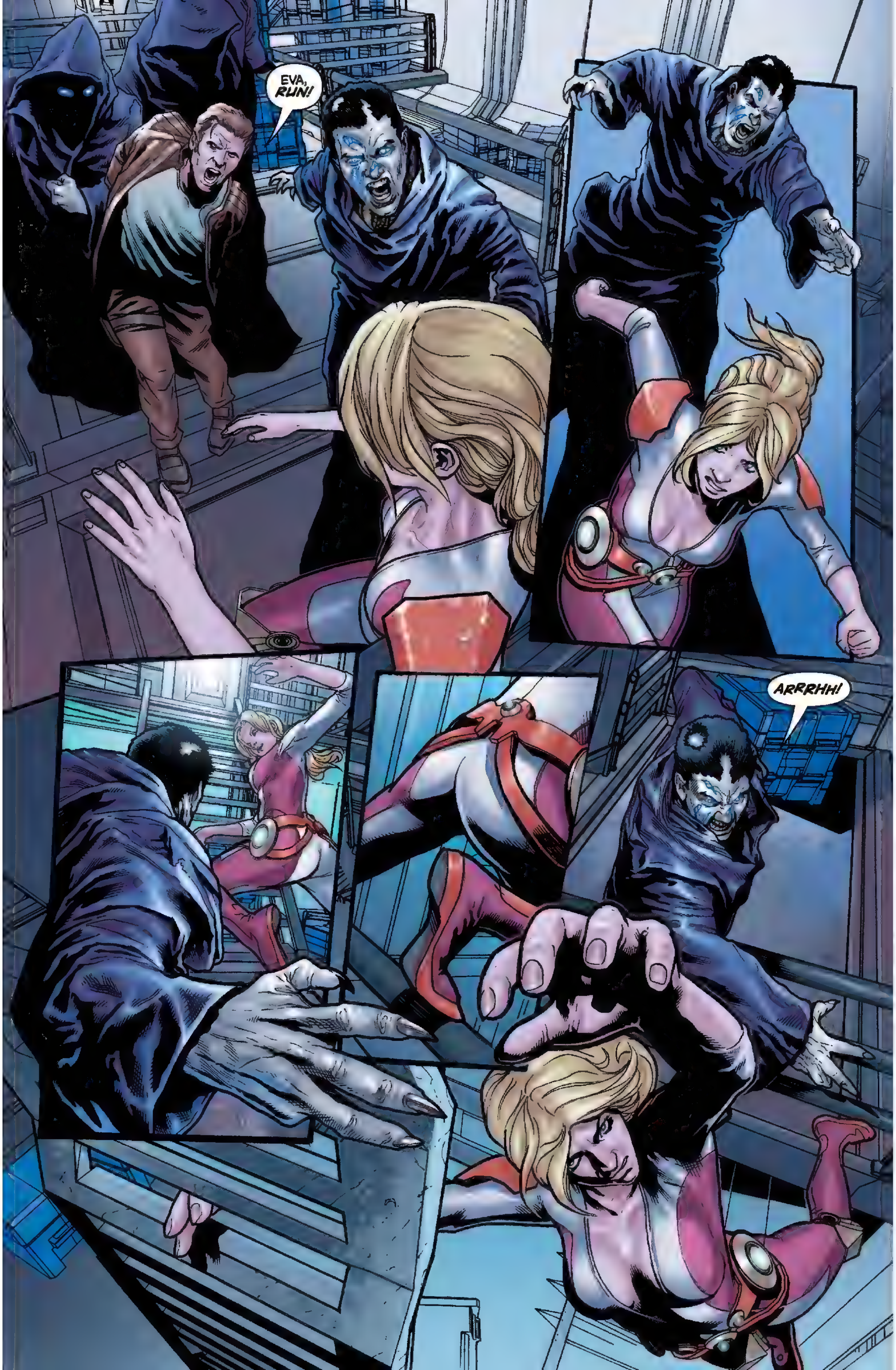

KRCHOWWW!
EVA, MOVE!
JACK, WHAT *ARE* THESE THINGS?
KRCHOWWW!
LATER! JUST GET --

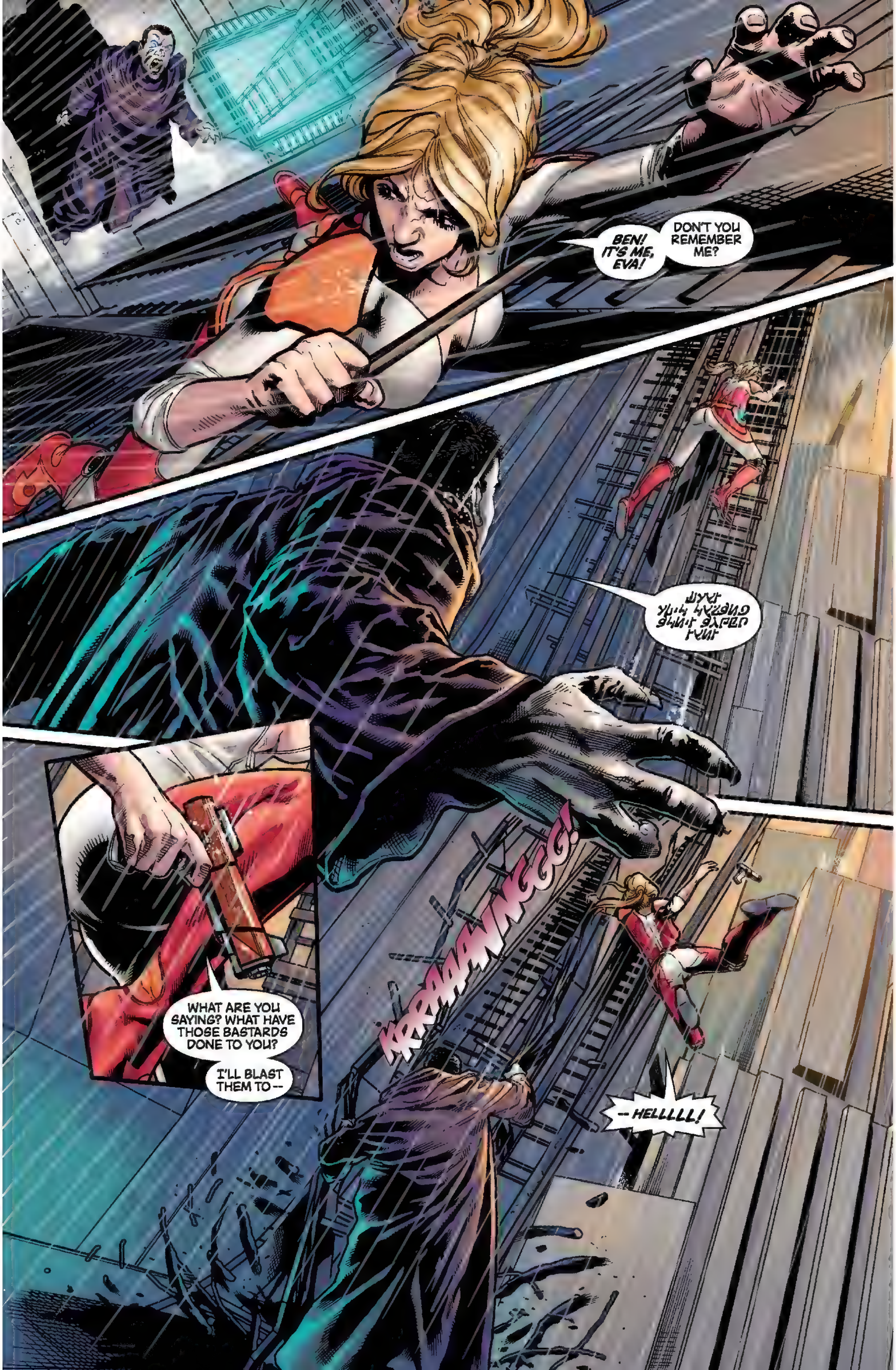

URRK!
JACK!
LET GO OF HIM, YOU SON OF A --
EVA, *NO!* IT'S --

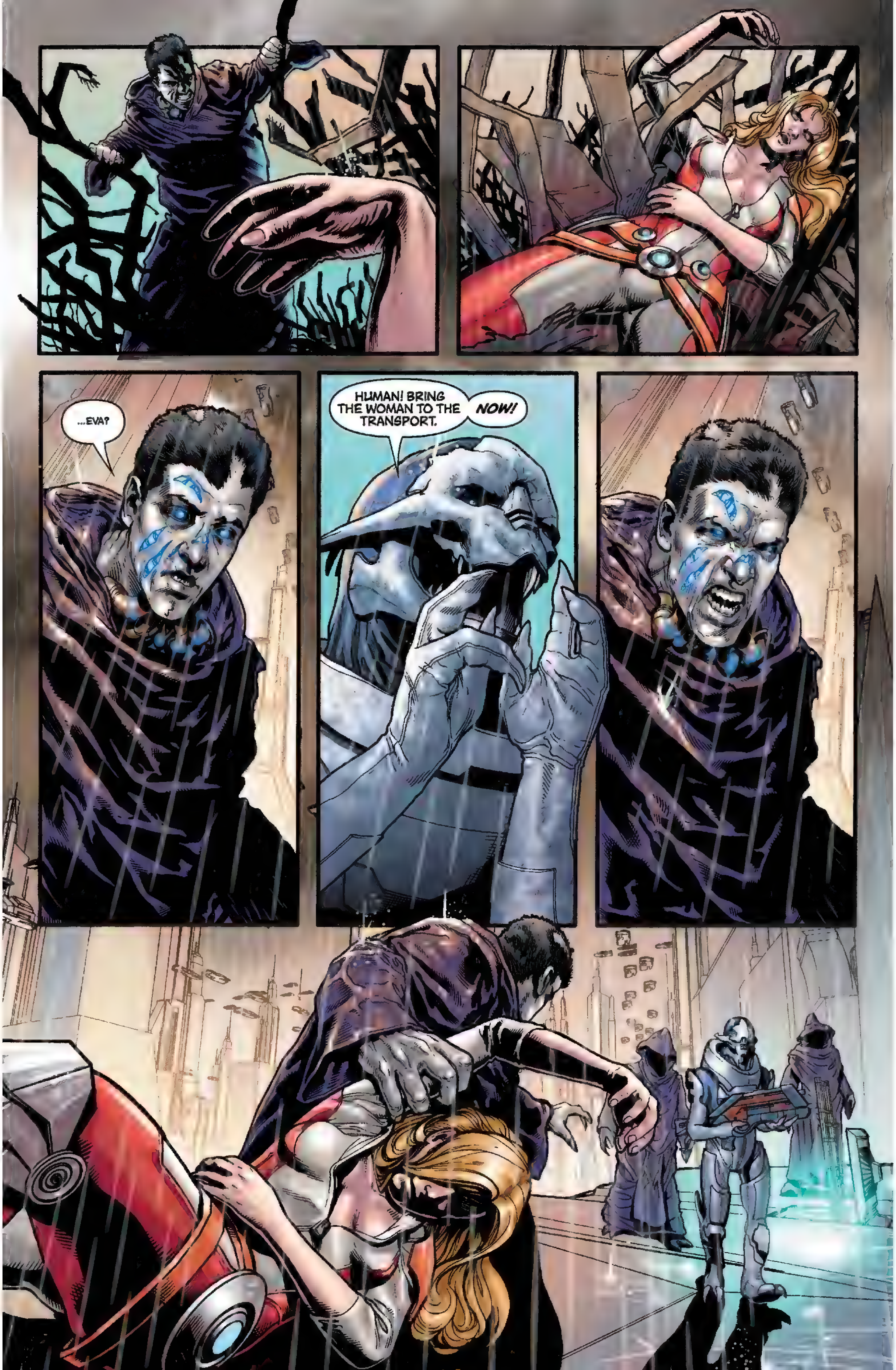

--IT'S *BEN!*

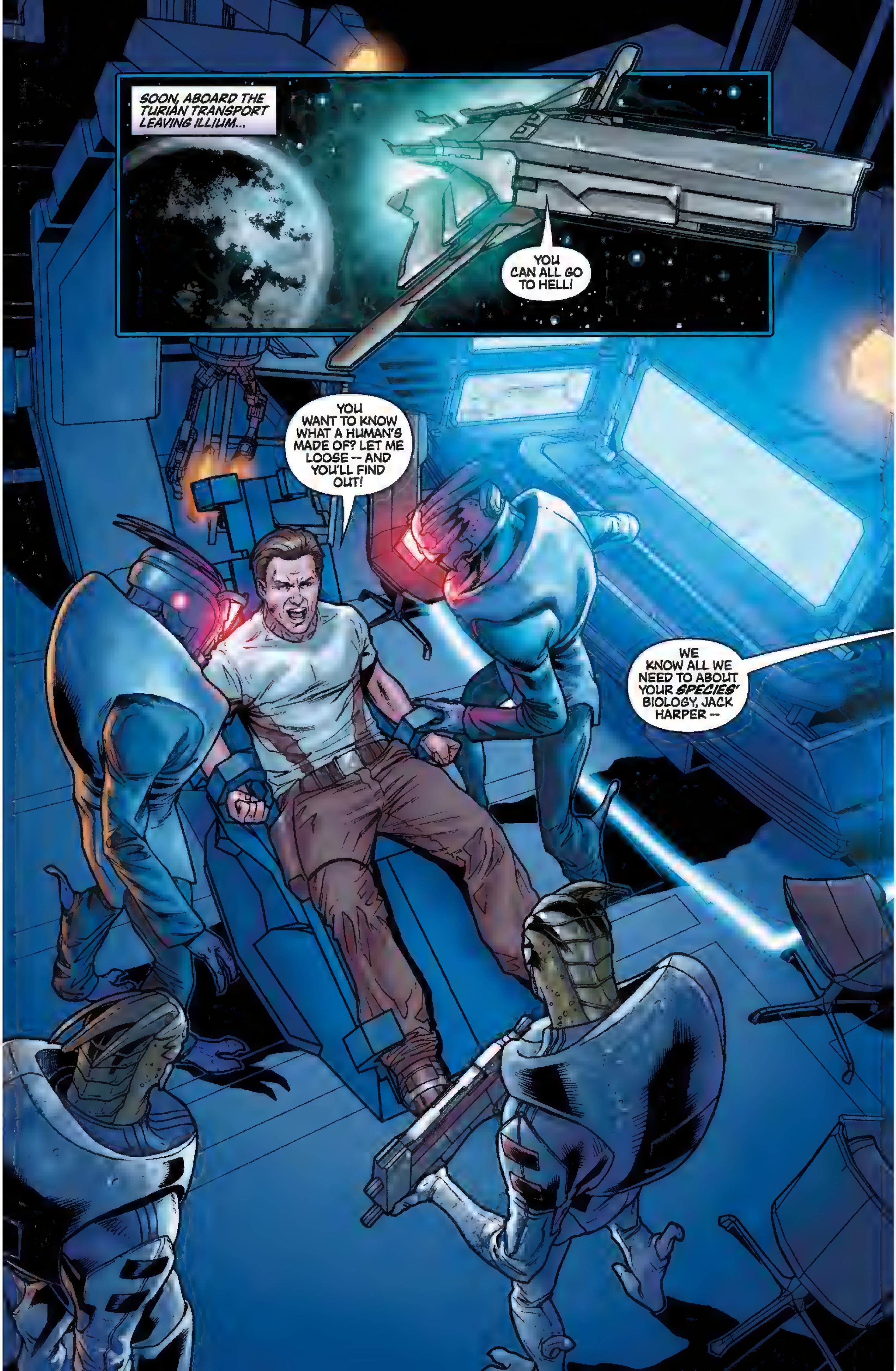

JACK HARPER WELL REMEMBERS HIS FIRST MEETING WITH BEN HISLOP.
YOUNG, BRASH, ENTHUSIASTIC -- AND A MASTER OF MUNITIONS. A PERFECT RECRUIT FOR HARPER'S PROHUMANITY MOVEMENT.
JACK REMEMBERS A MAN WHO QUICKLY BECAME HIS RIGHT HAND --
-- AND IMPORTANT TO EVA CORE IN WAYS JACK NEVER ASKED ABOUT.
BUT MOST OF ALL, JACK REMEMBERS A MAN --
-- AND NOT A MONSTER.
BEN! BEN --

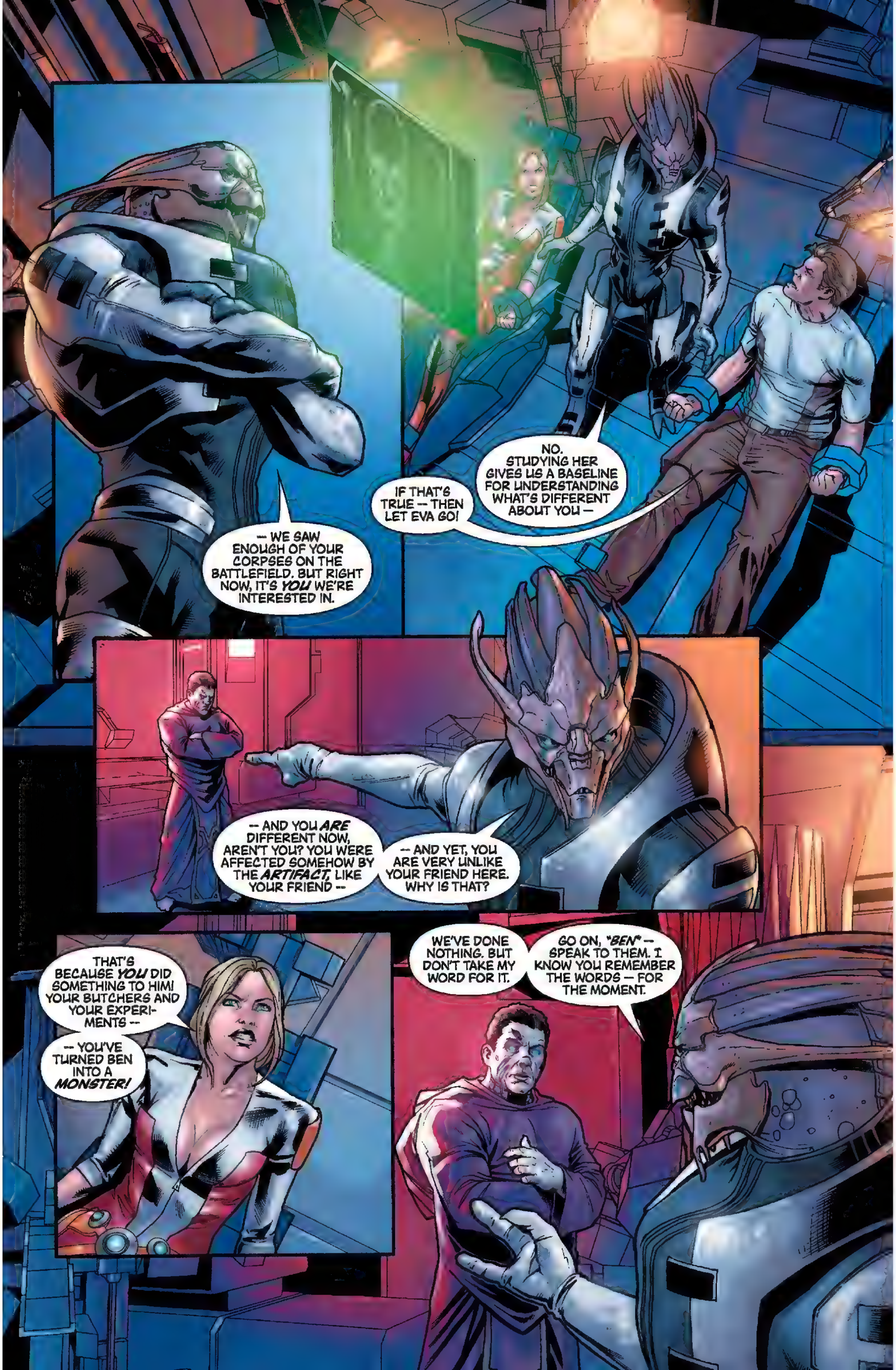

-- LET GO OF JACK!
YOU'RE KILLING HIM!
YES, *"BEN"* -- WE DON'T WANT THAT. RELEASE HIM --
--AND SEIZE *HER!*

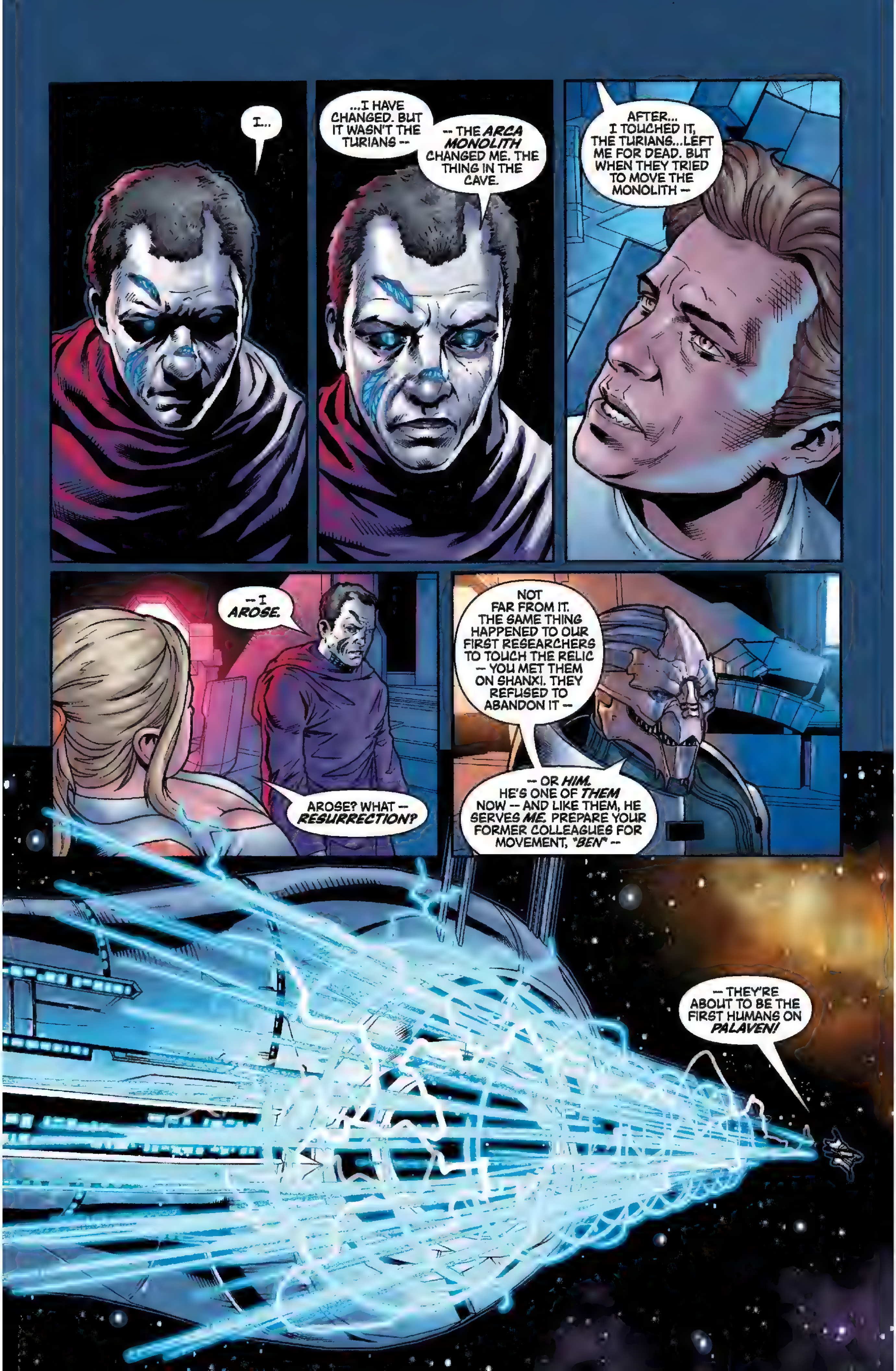

EVA, RUN!
ARRRHH!

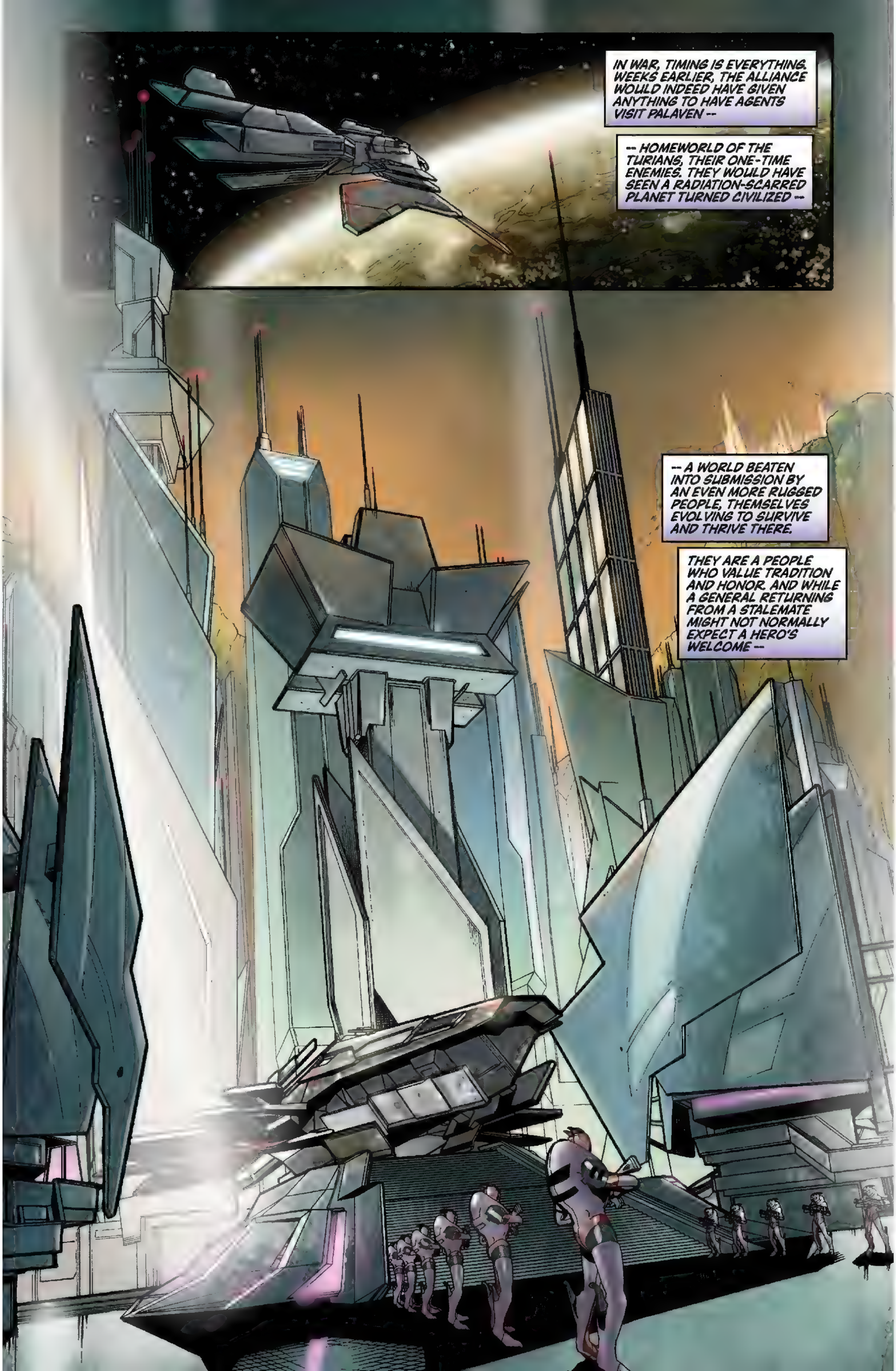

BEN! IT'S ME, EVA!
DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? WHAT HAVE THOSE BASTARDS DONE TO YOU?
I'LL BLAST THEM TO --
KRAAAANNGGG!
-- HELLLLLL!

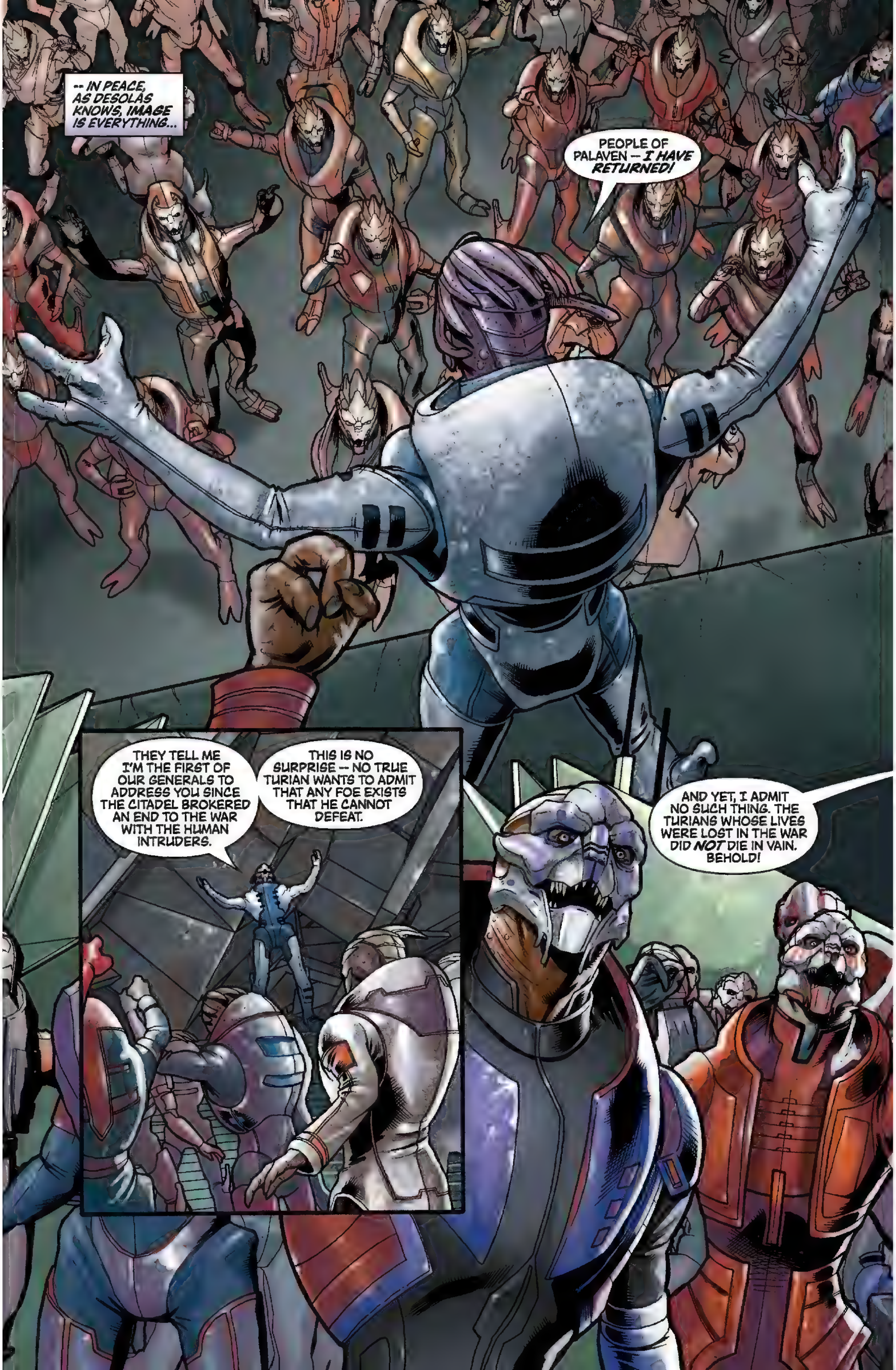

...EVA?
HUMAN! BRING THE WOMAN TO THE TRANSPORT.
NOW!


SOON, ABOARD THE TURIAN TRANSPORT LEAVING ILLIUM...
YOU CAN ALL GO TO HELL!
YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT A HUMAN'S MADE OF? LET ME LOOSE -- AND YOU'LL FIND OUT!
WE KNOW ALL WE NEED TO ABOUT YOUR *SPECIES'* BIOLOGY, JACK HARPER --

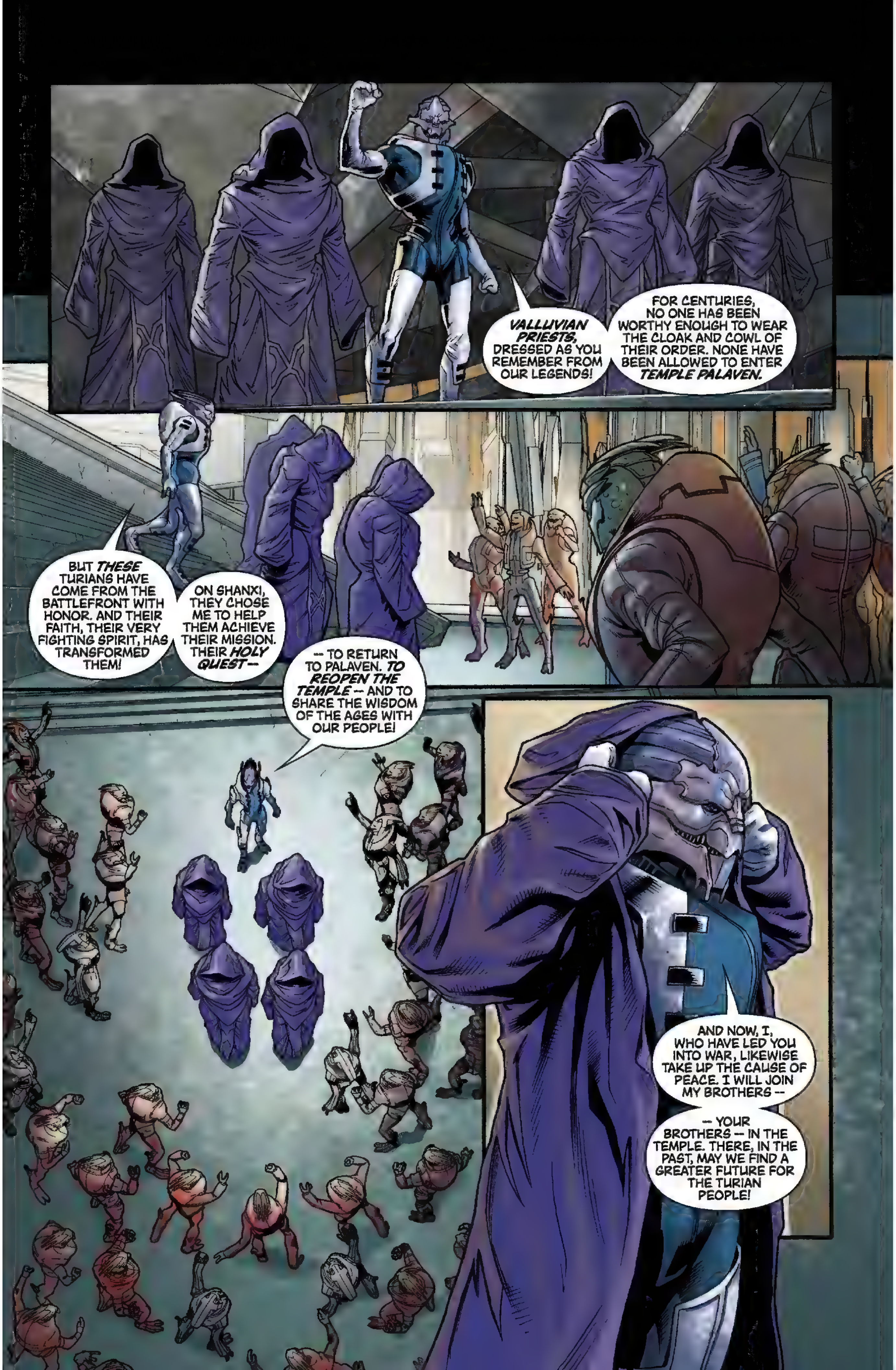

-- WE SAW ENOUGH OF YOUR CORPSES ON THE BATTLEFIELD. BUT RIGHT NOW, IT'S *YOU* WE'RE INTERESTED IN.
IF THAT'S TRUE -- THEN LET EVA GO!
NO. STUDYING HER GIVES US A BASELINE FOR UNDERSTANDING WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT YOU --
-- AND YOU *ARE* DIFFERENT NOW, AREN'T YOU? YOU WERE AFFECTED SOMEHOW BY THE *ARTIFACT,* LIKE YOUR FRIEND --
-- AND YET, YOU ARE VERY UNLIKE YOUR FRIEND HERE. WHY IS THAT?
THAT'S BECAUSE *YOU* DID SOMETHING TO HIM! YOUR BUTCHERS AND YOUR EXPERIMENTS --
-- YOU'VE TURNED BEN INTO A *MONSTER!*
WE'VE DONE NOTHING. BUT DON'T TAKE MY WORD FOR IT.
GO ON, *"BEN"* -- SPEAK TO THEM. I KNOW YOU REMEMBER THE WORDS -- FOR THE MOMENT.

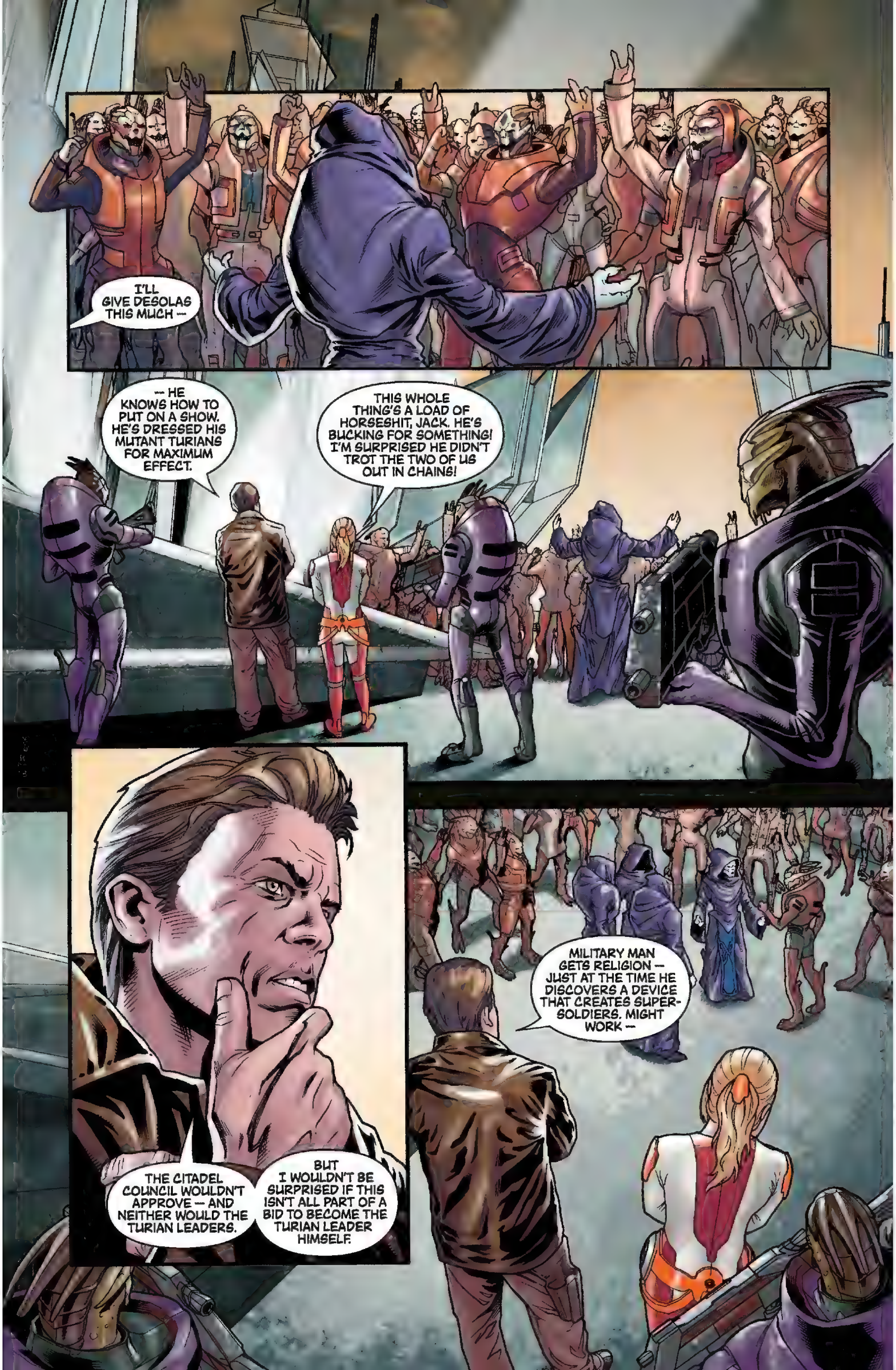

I...
...I HAVE CHANGED. BUT IT WASN'T THE TURIANS --
-- THE *ARCA MONOLITH* CHANGED ME. THE THING IN THE CAVE.
AFTER... I TOUCHED IT, THE TURIANS...LEFT ME FOR DEAD. BUT WHEN THEY TRIED TO MOVE THE MONOLITH --
-- I *AROSE.*
AROSE? WHAT -- *RESURRECTION?*
NOT FAR FROM IT. THE SAME THING HAPPENED TO OUR FIRST RESEARCHERS TO TOUCH THE RELIC -- YOU MET THEM ON SHANXI. THEY REFUSED TO ABANDON IT --
-- OR *HIM.* HE'S ONE OF *THEM* NOW -- AND LIKE THEM, HE SERVES *ME.* PREPARE YOUR FORMER COLLEAGUES FOR MOVEMENT, *"BEN"* --
-- THEY'RE ABOUT TO BE THE FIRST HUMANS ON *PALAVEN!*

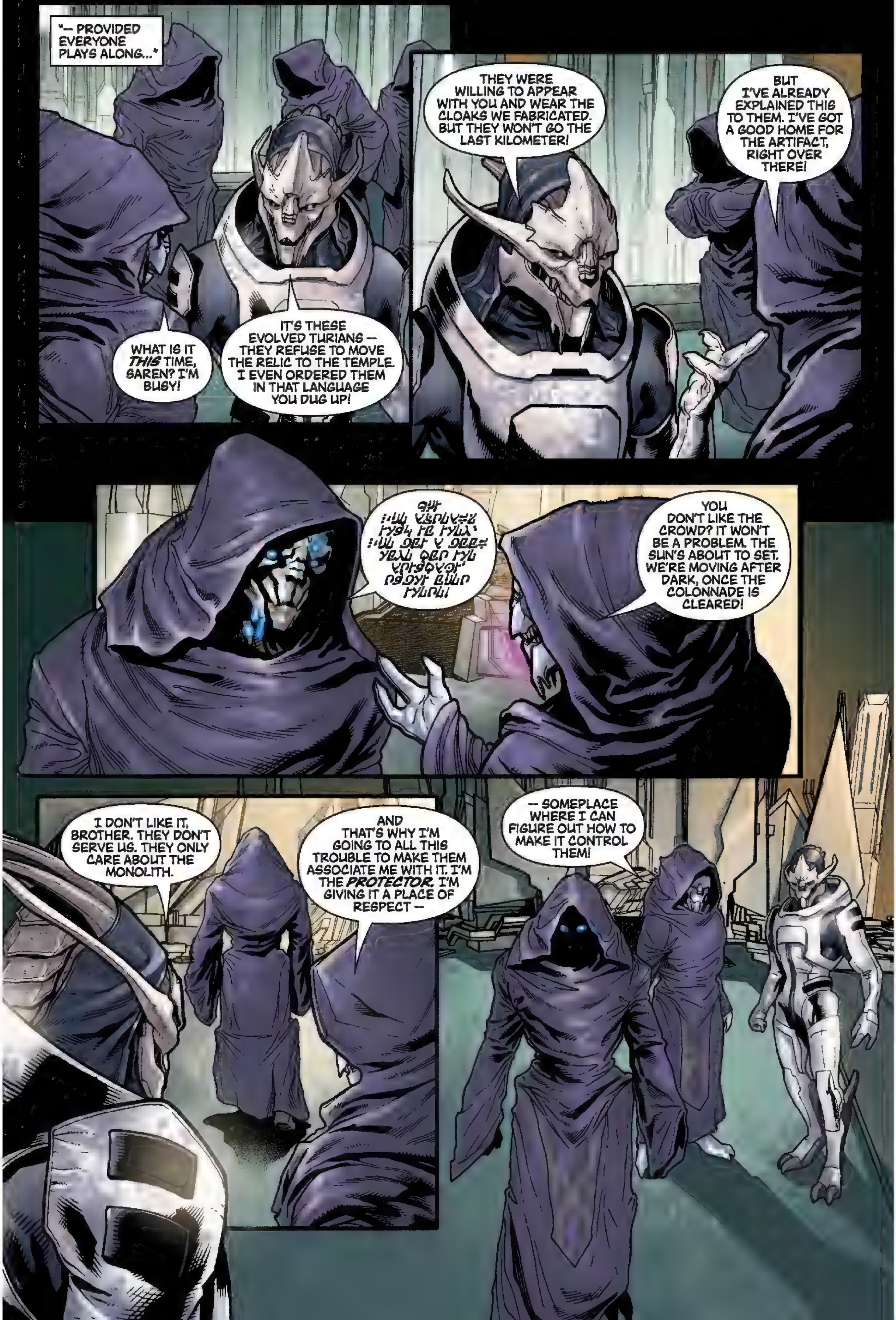

IN WAR, TIMING IS EVERYTHING. WEEKS EARLIER, THE ALLIANCE WOULD INDEED HAVE GIVEN ANYTHING TO HAVE AGENTS VISIT PALAVEN --
-- HOMEWORLD OF THE TURIANS, THEIR ONE-TIME ENEMIES. THEY WOULD HAVE SEEN A RADIATION-SCARRED PLANET TURNED CIVILIZED --
-- A WORLD BEATEN INTO SUBMISSION BY AN EVEN MORE RUGGED PEOPLE, THEMSELVES EVOLVING TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE THERE.
THEY ARE A PEOPLE WHO VALUE TRADITION AND HONOR. AND WHILE A GENERAL RETURNING FROM A STALEMATE MIGHT NOT NORMALLY EXPECT A HERO'S WELCOME --

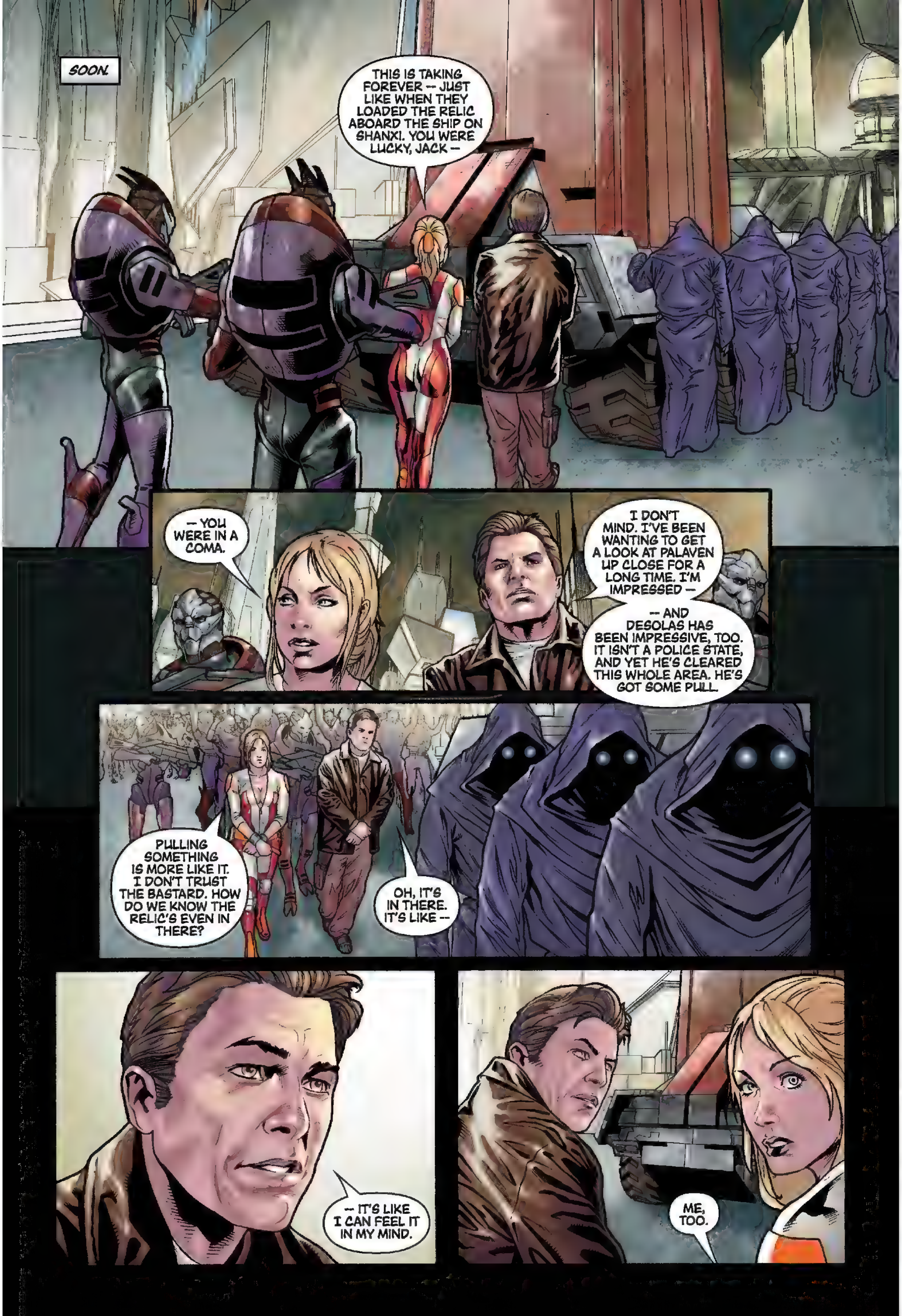


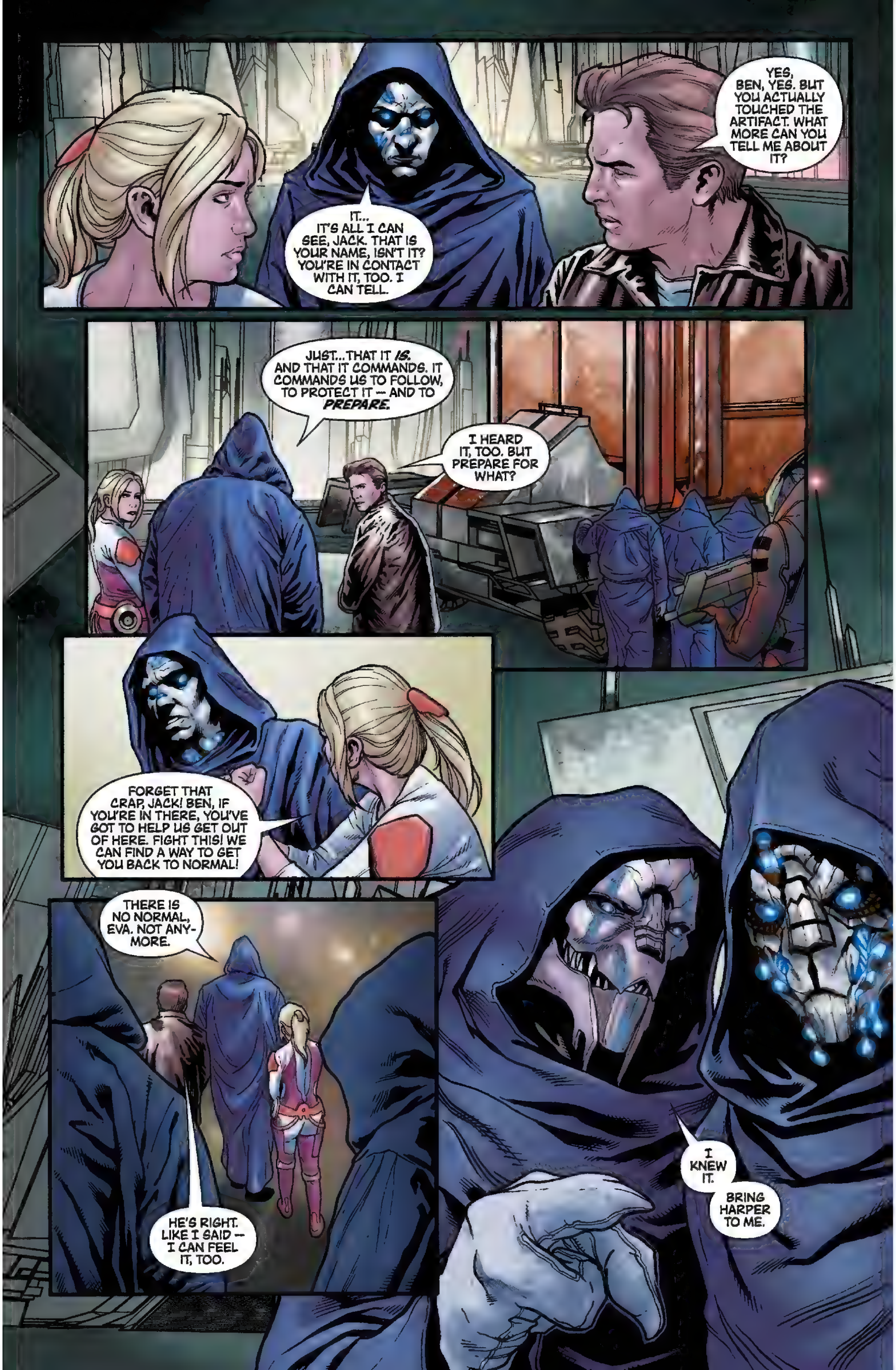
-- IN PEACE, AS DESOLAS KNOWS, IMAGE IS EVERYTHING...
PEOPLE OF PALAVEN -- *I HAVE RETURNED!*
THEY TELL ME I'M THE FIRST OF OUR GENERALS TO ADDRESS YOU SINCE THE CITADEL BROKERED AN END TO THE WAR WITH THE HUMAN INTRUDERS.
THIS IS NO SURPRISE -- NO TRUE TURIAN WANTS TO ADMIT THAT ANY FOE EXISTS THAT HE CANNOT DEFEAT.
AND YET, I ADMIT NO SUCH THING. THE TURIANS WHOSE LIVES WERE LOST IN THE WAR DID *NOT* DIE IN VAIN. BEHOLD!

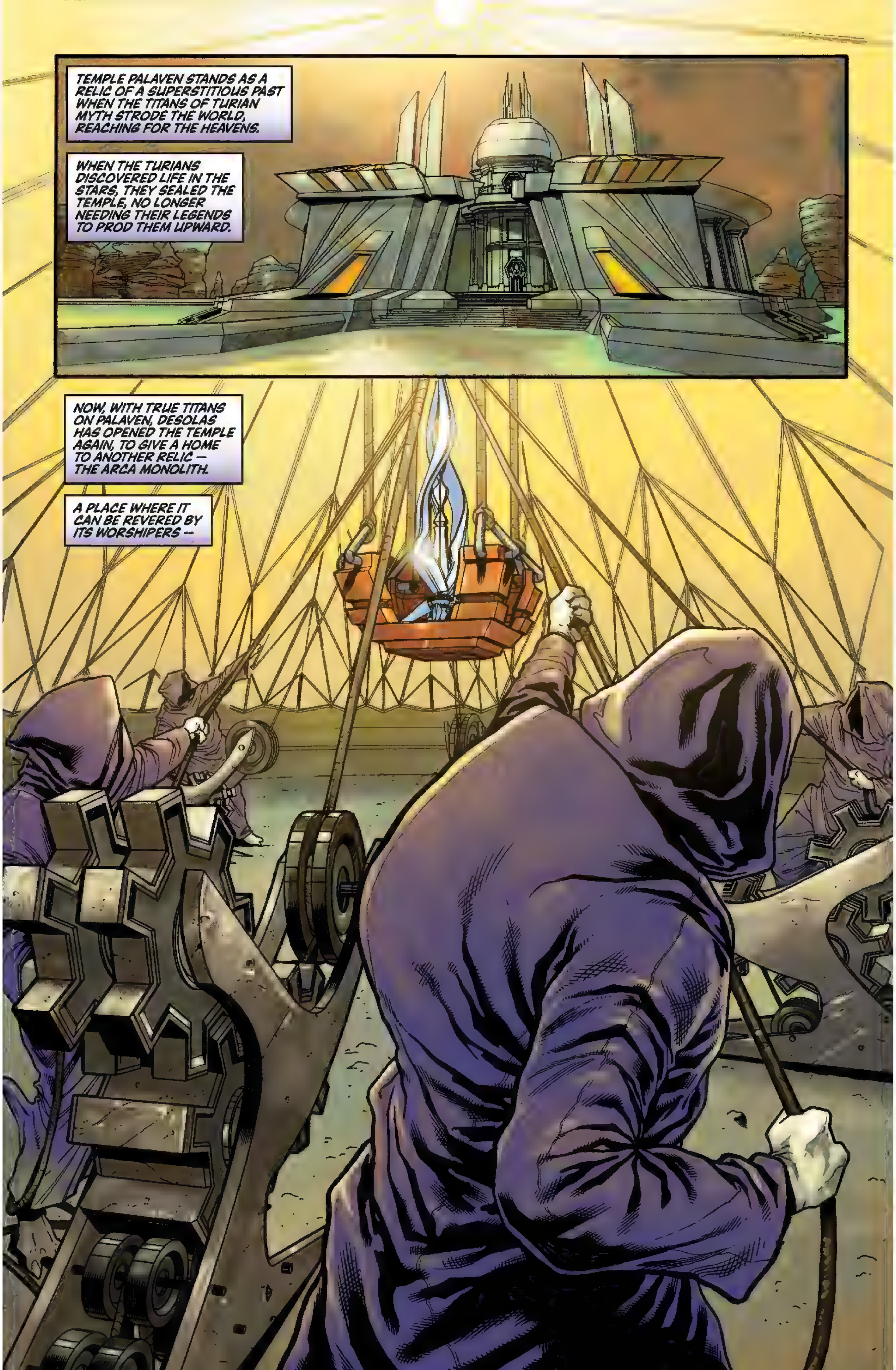

VALLUVIAN PRIESTS, DRESSED AS YOU REMEMBER FROM OUR LEGENDS!
FOR CENTURIES, NO ONE HAS BEEN WORTHY ENOUGH TO WEAR THE CLOAK AND COWL OF THEIR ORDER. NONE HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO ENTER TEMPLE PALAVEN.
BUT THESE TURIANS HAVE COME FROM THE BATTLEFRONT WITH HONOR. AND THEIR FAITH, THEIR VERY FIGHTING SPIRIT, HAS TRANSFORMED THEM!
ON SHANXI, THEY CHOSE ME TO HELP THEM ACHIEVE THEIR MISSION. THEIR HOLY QUEST --
-- TO RETURN TO PALAVEN. TO REOPEN THE TEMPLE -- AND TO SHARE THE WISDOM OF THE AGES WITH OUR PEOPLE!
AND NOW, I, WHO HAVE LED YOU INTO WAR, LIKEWISE TAKE UP THE CAUSE OF PEACE. I WILL JOIN MY BROTHERS --
-- YOUR BROTHERS -- IN THE TEMPLE. THERE, IN THE PAST, MAY WE FIND A GREATER FUTURE FOR THE TURIAN PEOPLE!

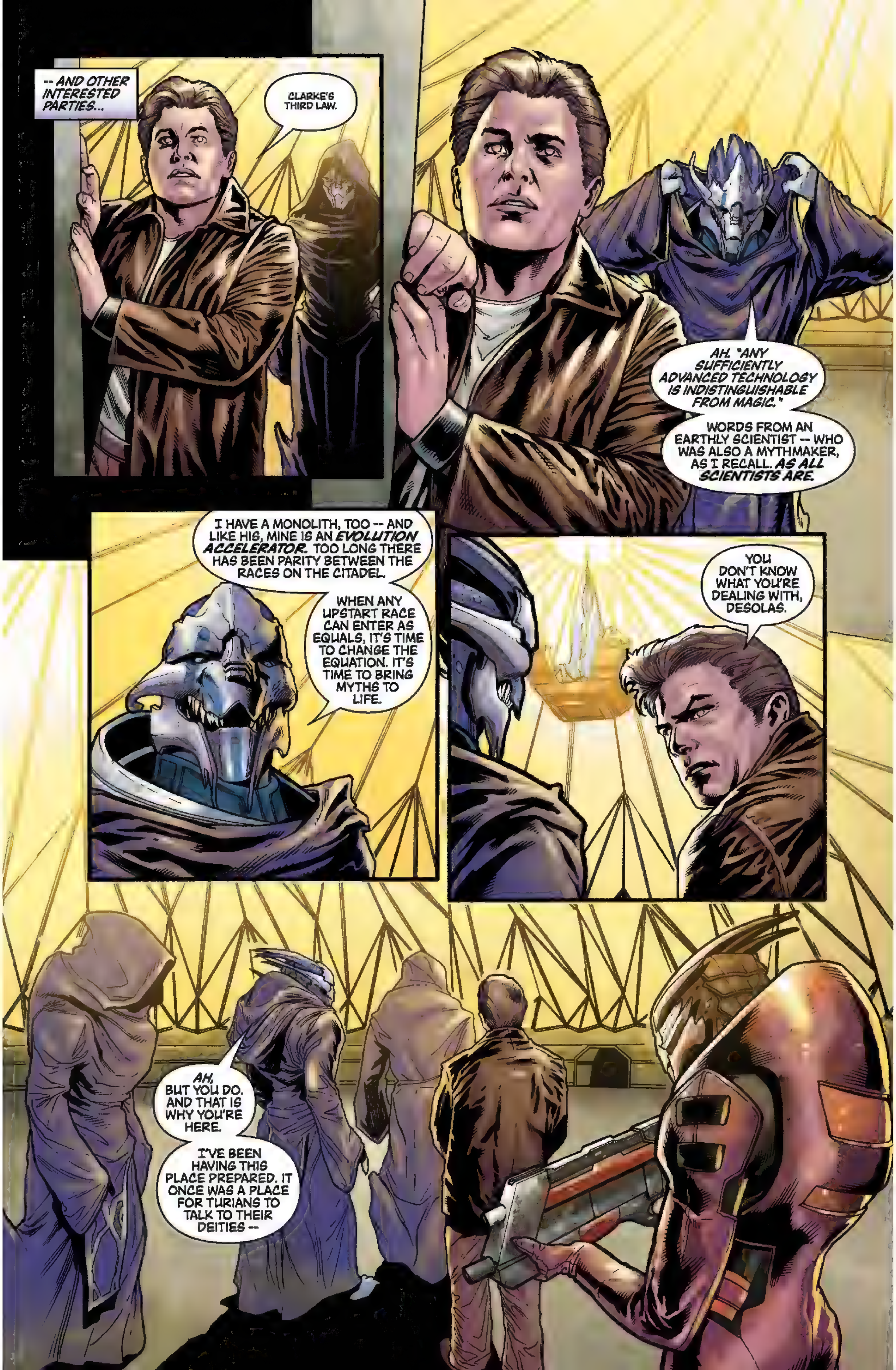

I'LL GIVE DESOLAS THIS MUCH --
-- HE KNOWS HOW TO PUT ON A SHOW. HE'S DRESSED HIS MUTANT TURIANS FOR MAXIMUM EFFECT.
THIS WHOLE THING'S A LOAD OF HORSESHIT, JACK. HE'S BUCKING FOR SOMETHING! I'M SURPRISED HE DIDN'T TROT THE TWO OF US OUT IN CHAINS!
MILITARY MAN GETS RELIGION -- JUST AT THE TIME HE DISCOVERS A DEVICE THAT CREATES SUPER-SOLDIERS. MIGHT WORK --
THE CITADEL COUNCIL WOULDN'T APPROVE -- AND NEITHER WOULD THE TURIAN LEADERS.
BUT I WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF THIS ISN'T ALL PART OF A BID TO BECOME THE TURIAN LEADER HIMSELF.

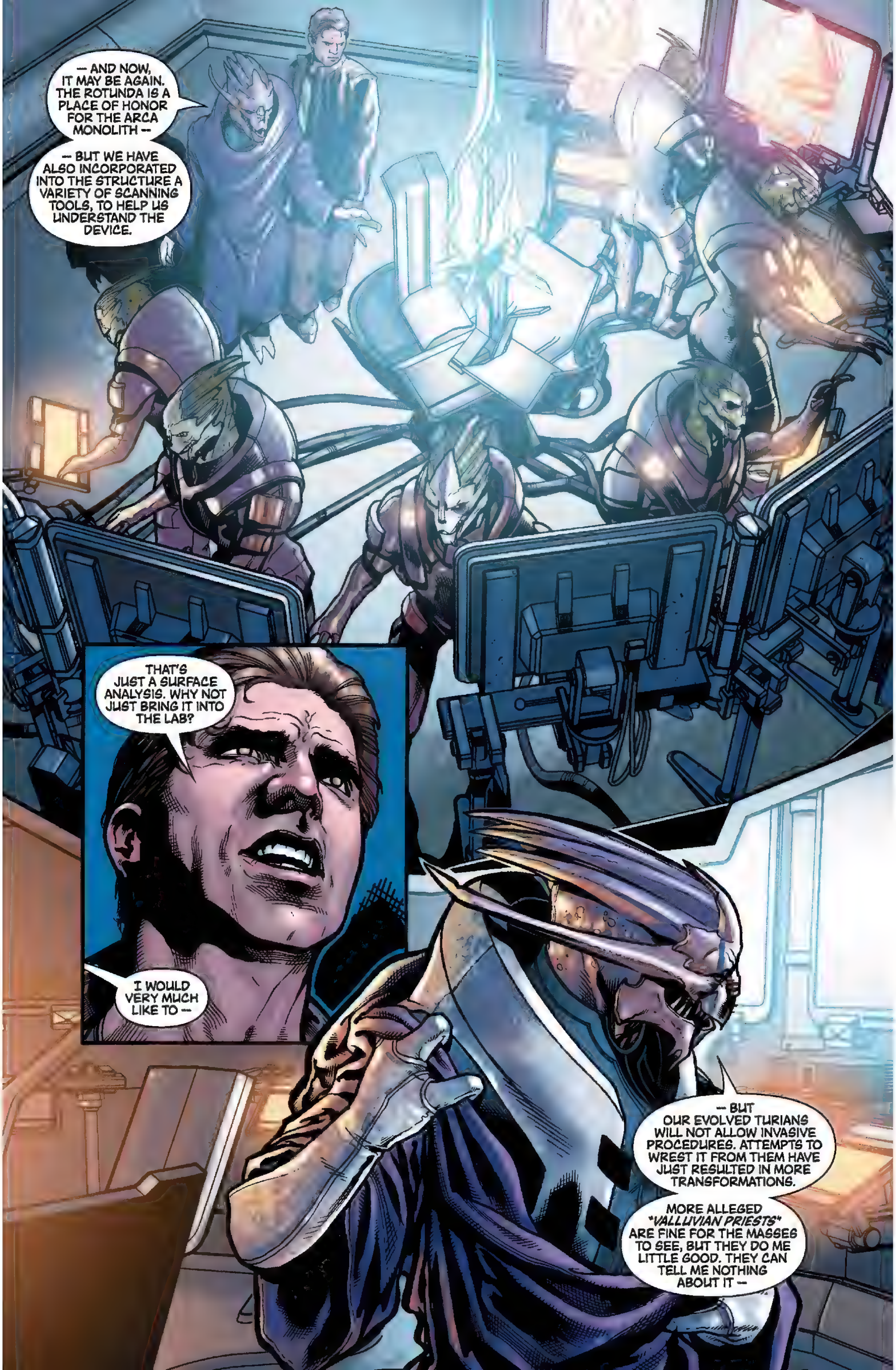

"— PROVIDED EVERYONE PLAYS ALONG..."
WHAT IS IT *THIS* TIME, SAREN? I'M BUSY!
IT'S THESE EVOLVED TURIANS — THEY REFUSE TO MOVE THE RELIC TO THE TEMPLE. I EVEN ORDERED THEM IN THAT LANGUAGE YOU DUG UP!
THEY WERE WILLING TO APPEAR WITH YOU AND WEAR THE CLOAKS WE FABRICATED. BUT THEY WON'T GO THE LAST KILOMETER!
BUT I'VE ALREADY EXPLAINED THIS TO THEM. I'VE GOT A GOOD HOME FOR THE ARTIFACT, RIGHT OVER THERE!
YOU DON'T LIKE THE CROWD? IT WON'T BE A PROBLEM. THE SUN'S ABOUT TO SET. WE'RE MOVING AFTER DARK, ONCE THE COLONNADE IS CLEARED!
I DON'T LIKE IT, BROTHER. THEY DON'T SERVE US. THEY ONLY CARE ABOUT THE MONOLITH.
AND THAT'S WHY I'M GOING TO ALL THIS TROUBLE TO MAKE THEM ASSOCIATE ME WITH IT. I'M THE *PROTECTOR.* I'M GIVING IT A PLACE OF RESPECT —
— SOMEPLACE WHERE I CAN FIGURE OUT HOW TO MAKE IT CONTROL THEM!

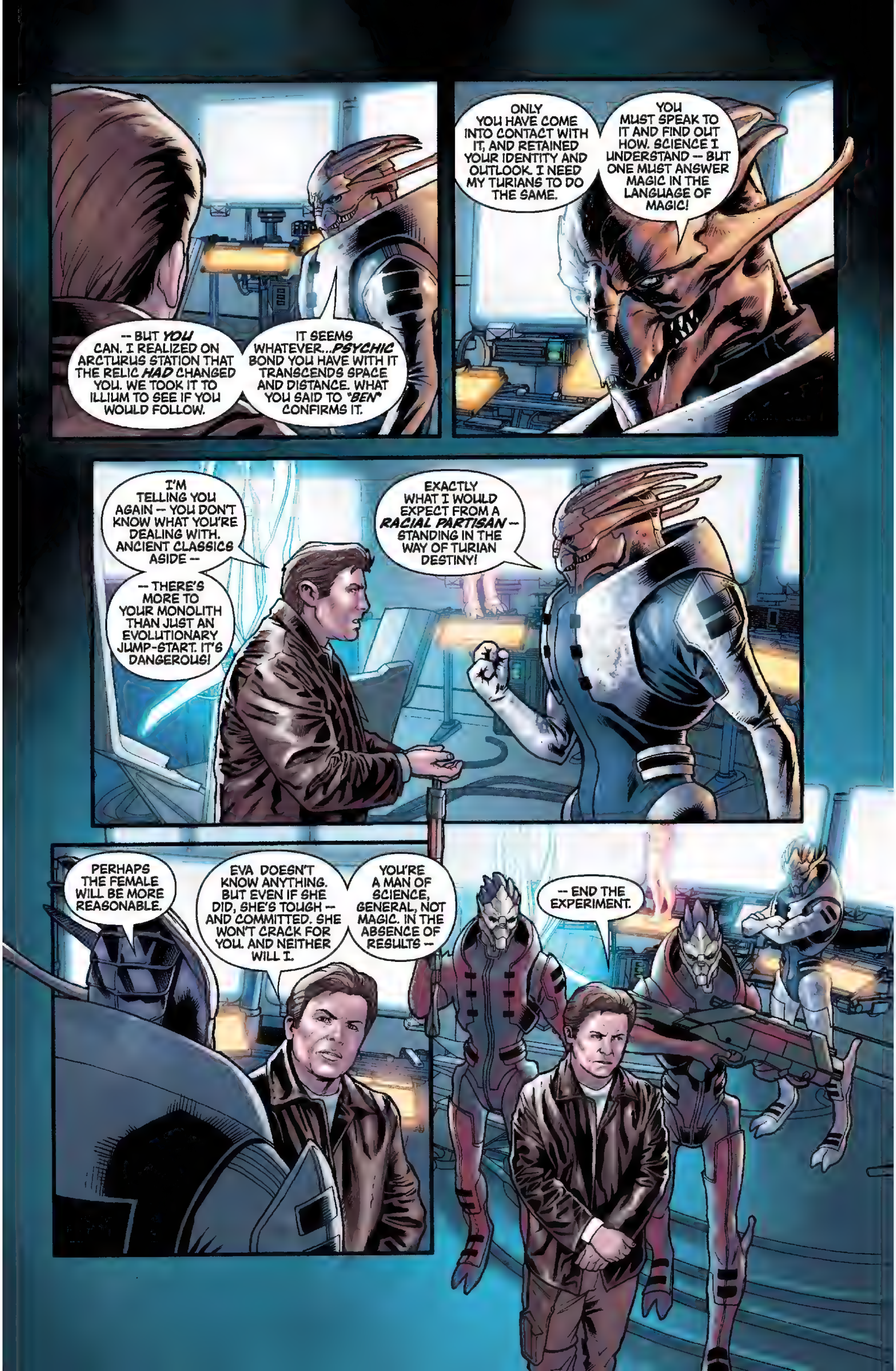

SOON.
THIS IS TAKING FOREVER -- JUST LIKE WHEN THEY LOADED THE RELIC ABOARD THE SHIP ON SHANXI. YOU WERE LUCKY, JACK --
-- YOU WERE IN A COMA.
I DON'T MIND. I'VE BEEN WANTING TO GET A LOOK AT PALAVEN UP CLOSE FOR A LONG TIME. I'M IMPRESSED --
-- AND DESOLAS HAS BEEN IMPRESSIVE, TOO. IT ISN'T A POLICE STATE, AND YET HE'S CLEARED THIS WHOLE AREA. HE'S GOT SOME PULL.
PULLING SOMETHING IS MORE LIKE IT. I DON'T TRUST THE BASTARD. HOW DO WE KNOW THE RELIC'S EVEN IN THERE?
OH, IT'S IN THERE. IT'S LIKE --
-- IT'S LIKE I CAN FEEL IT IN MY MIND.
ME, TOO.

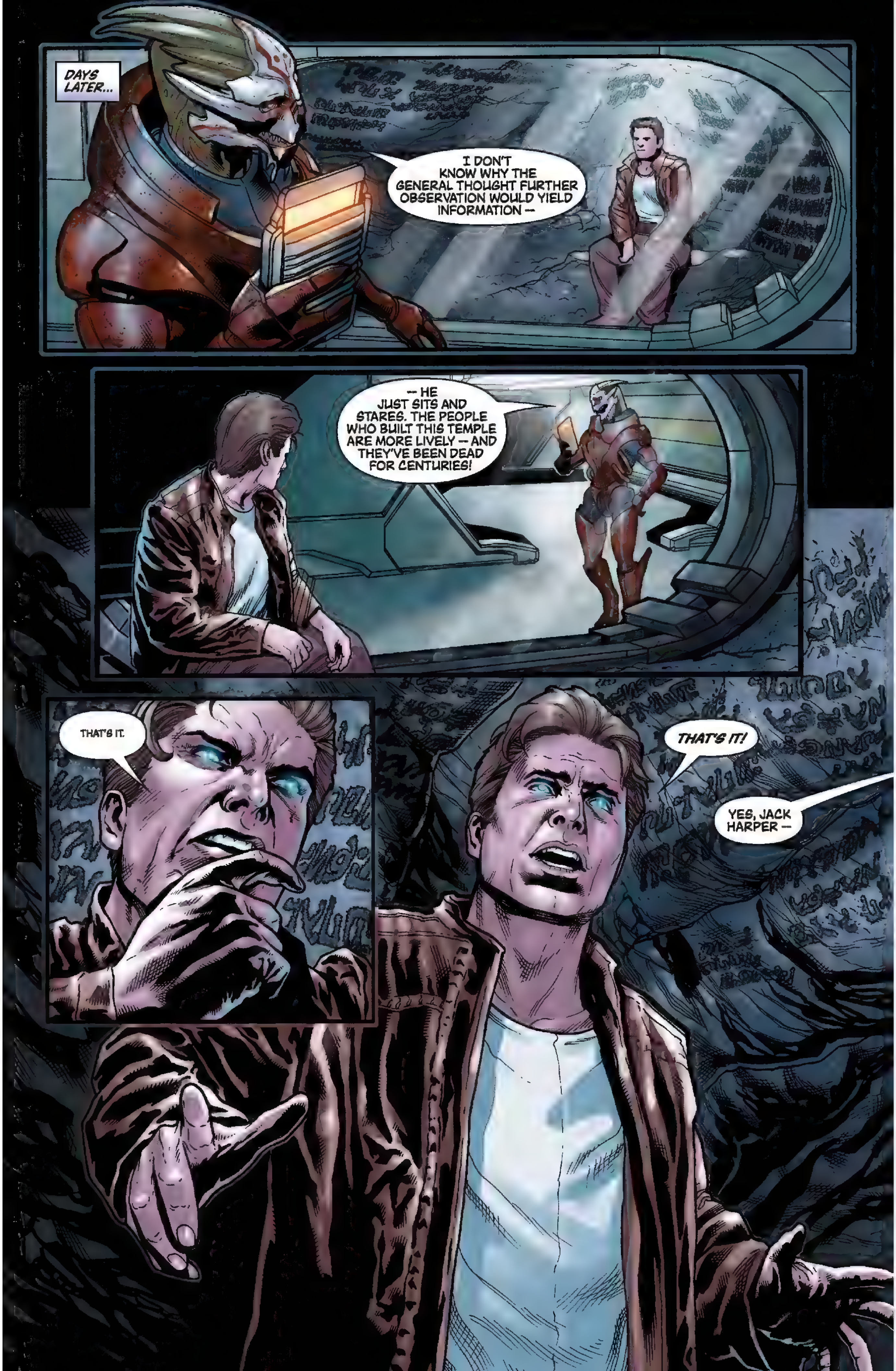

YES, BEN, YES. BUT YOU ACTUALLY TOUCHED THE ARTIFACT. WHAT MORE CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT IT?
IT... IT'S ALL I CAN SEE, JACK. THAT IS YOUR NAME, ISN'T IT? YOU'RE IN CONTACT WITH IT, TOO. I CAN TELL.
JUST...THAT IT *IS*. AND THAT IT COMMANDS. IT COMMANDS US TO FOLLOW, TO PROTECT IT -- AND TO *PREPARE*.
I HEARD IT, TOO. BUT PREPARE FOR WHAT?
FORGET THAT CRAP, JACK! BEN, IF YOU'RE IN THERE, YOU'VE GOT TO HELP US GET OUT OF HERE. FIGHT THIS! WE CAN FIND A WAY TO GET YOU BACK TO NORMAL!
THERE IS NO NORMAL, EVA. NOT ANYMORE.
HE'S RIGHT. LIKE I SAID -- I CAN FEEL IT, TOO.
I KNEW IT.
BRING HARPER TO ME.

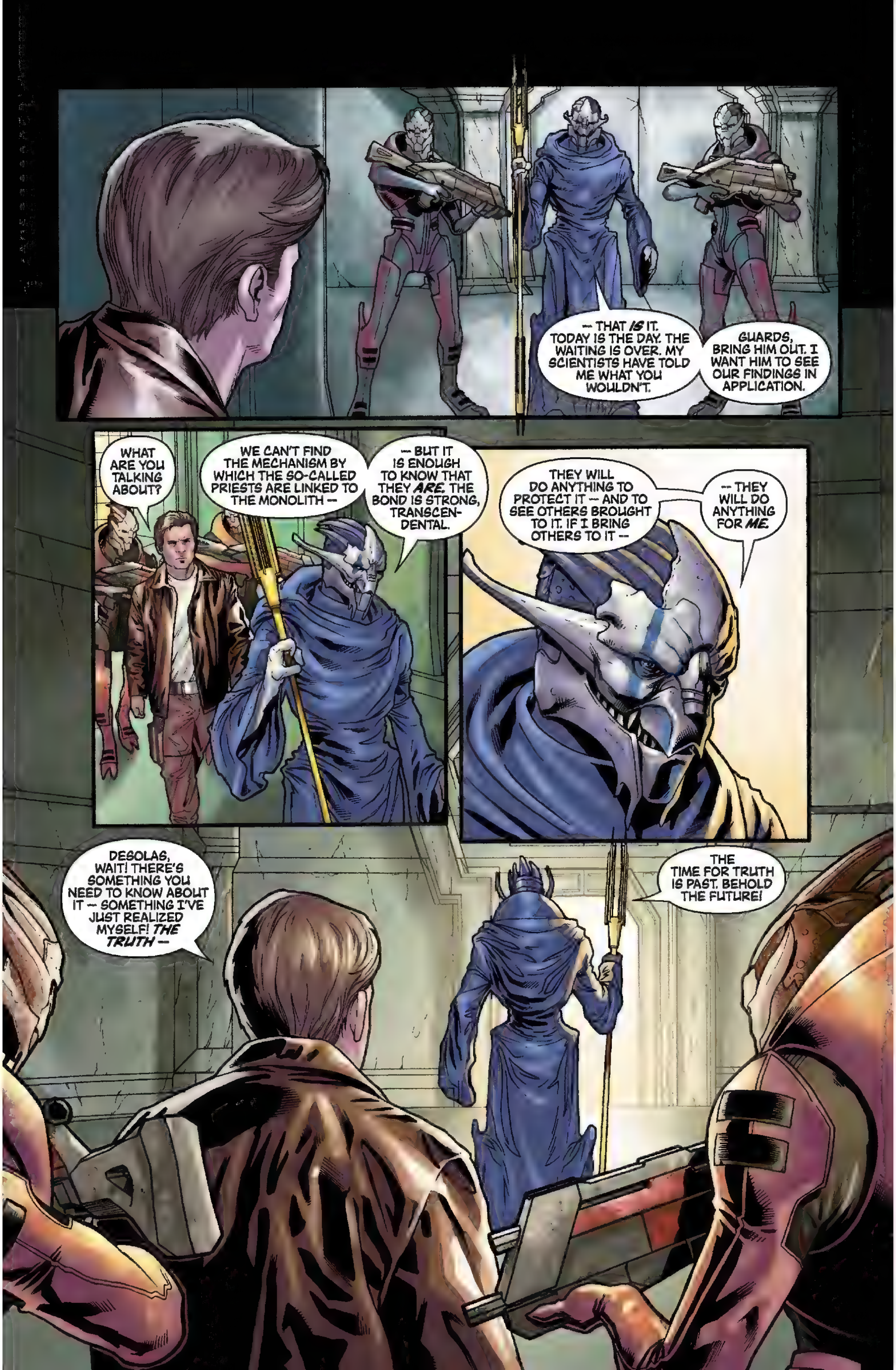

TEMPLE PALAVEN STANDS AS A RELIC OF A SUPERSTITIOUS PAST WHEN THE TITANS OF TURIAN MYTH STRODE THE WORLD, REACHING FOR THE HEAVENS.
WHEN THE TURIANS DISCOVERED LIFE IN THE STARS, THEY SEALED THE TEMPLE, NO LONGER NEEDING THEIR LEGENDS TO PROD THEM UPWARD.
NOW, WITH TRUE TITANS ON PALAVEN, DESOLAS HAS OPENED THE TEMPLE AGAIN, TO GIVE A HOME TO ANOTHER RELIC — THE ARCA MONOLITH.
A PLACE WHERE IT CAN BE REVERED BY ITS WORSHIPERS --

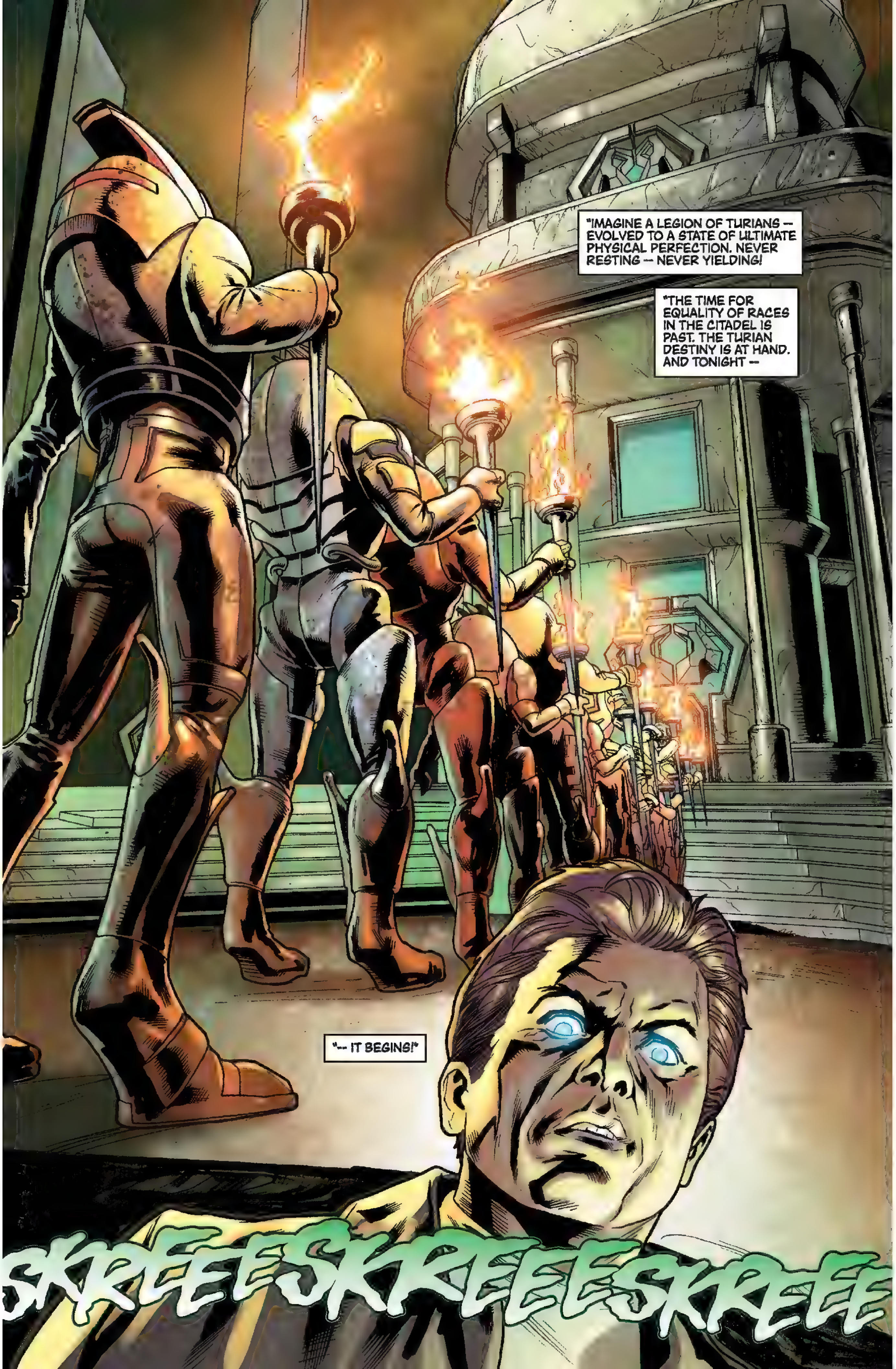

-- AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES...
CLARKE'S THIRD LAW.
AH. "ANY SUFFICIENTLY ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY IS INDISTINGUISHABLE FROM MAGIC."
WORDS FROM AN EARTHLY SCIENTIST -- WHO WAS ALSO A MYTHMAKER, AS I RECALL. AS ALL SCIENTISTS ARE.
I HAVE A MONOLITH, TOO -- AND LIKE HIS, MINE IS AN EVOLUTION ACCELERATOR. TOO LONG THERE HAS BEEN PARITY BETWEEN THE RACES ON THE CITADEL.
WHEN ANY UPSTART RACE CAN ENTER AS EQUALS, IT'S TIME TO CHANGE THE EQUATION. IT'S TIME TO BRING MYTHS TO LIFE.
YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DEALING WITH, DESOLAS.
AH, BUT YOU DO. AND THAT IS WHY YOU'RE HERE.
I'VE BEEN HAVING THIS PLACE PREPARED. IT ONCE WAS A PLACE FOR TURIANS TO TALK TO THEIR DEITIES --

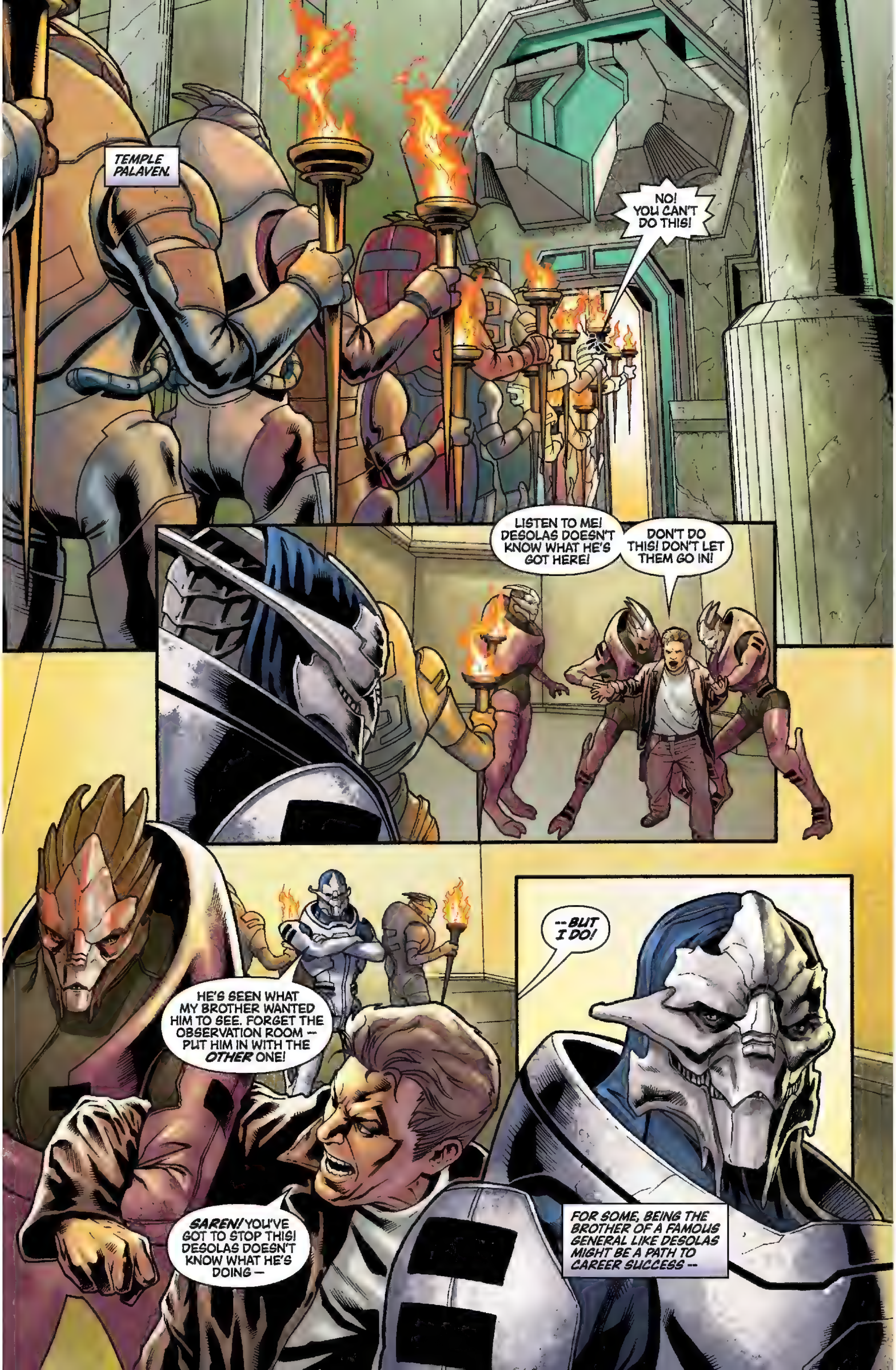

-- AND NOW, IT MAY BE AGAIN. THE ROTUNDA IS A PLACE OF HONOR FOR THE ARCA MONOLITH --
-- BUT WE HAVE ALSO INCORPORATED INTO THE STRUCTURE A VARIETY OF SCANNING TOOLS, TO HELP US UNDERSTAND THE DEVICE.
THAT'S JUST A SURFACE ANALYSIS. WHY NOT JUST BRING IT INTO THE LAB?
I WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO --
-- BUT OUR EVOLVED TURIANS WILL NOT ALLOW INVASIVE PROCEDURES. ATTEMPTS TO WREST IT FROM THEM HAVE JUST RESULTED IN MORE TRANSFORMATIONS.
MORE ALLEGED *"VALLUVIAN PRIESTS"* ARE FINE FOR THE MASSES TO SEE, BUT THEY DO ME LITTLE GOOD. THEY CAN TELL ME NOTHING ABOUT IT --

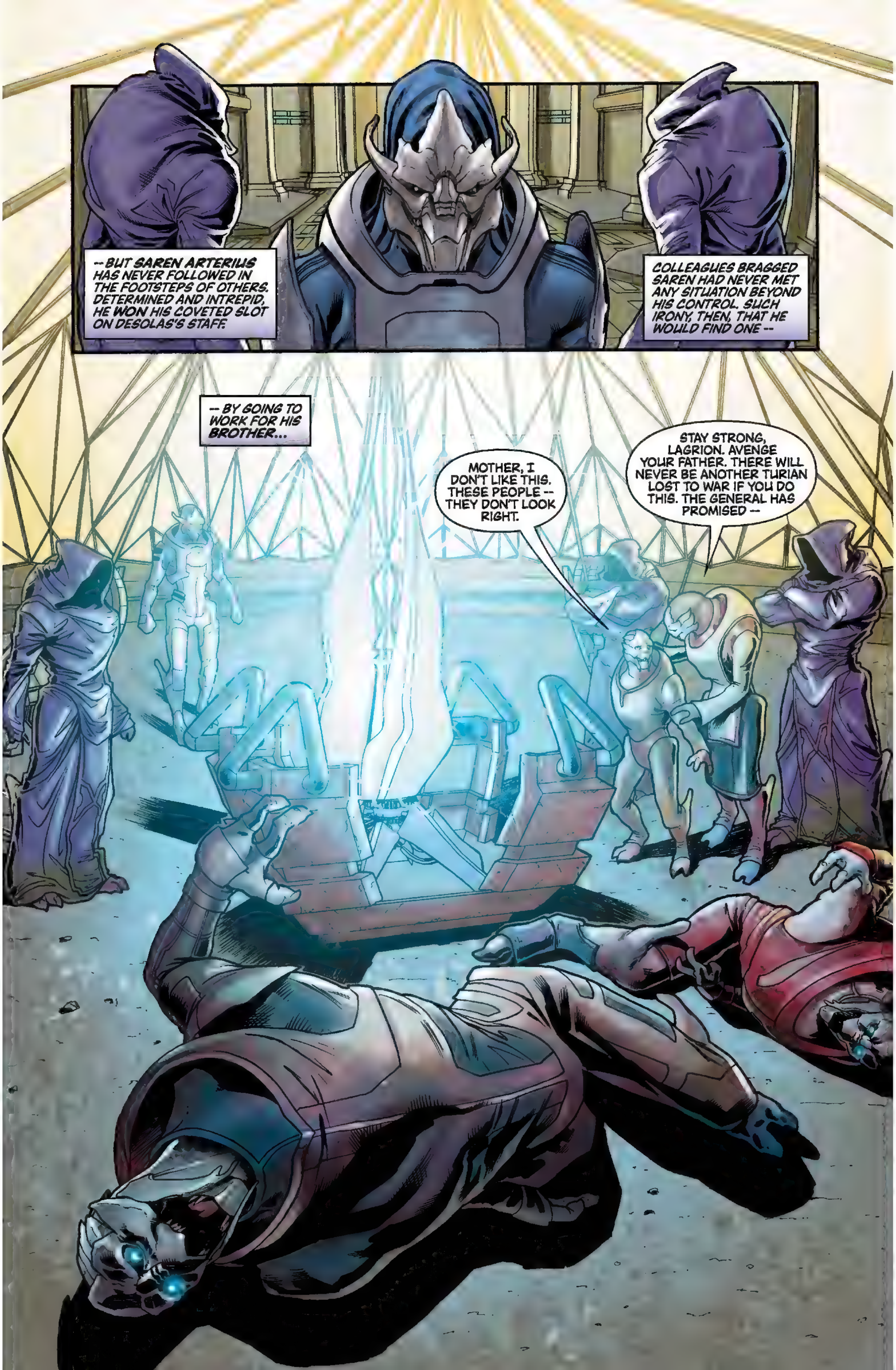

-- BUT *YOU* CAN. I REALIZED ON ARCTURUS STATION THAT THE RELIC *HAD* CHANGED YOU. WE TOOK IT TO ILLIUM TO SEE IF YOU WOULD FOLLOW.
IT SEEMS WHATEVER...*PSYCHIC* BOND YOU HAVE WITH IT TRANSCENDS SPACE AND DISTANCE. WHAT YOU SAID TO *"BEN"* CONFIRMS IT.
ONLY YOU HAVE COME INTO CONTACT WITH IT, AND RETAINED YOUR IDENTITY AND OUTLOOK. I NEED MY TURIANS TO DO THE SAME.
YOU MUST SPEAK TO IT AND FIND OUT HOW. SCIENCE I UNDERSTAND -- BUT ONE MUST ANSWER MAGIC IN THE LANGUAGE OF MAGIC!
I'M TELLING YOU AGAIN -- YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DEALING WITH. ANCIENT CLASSICS ASIDE --
-- THERE'S MORE TO YOUR MONOLITH THAN JUST AN EVOLUTIONARY JUMP-START. IT'S DANGEROUS!
EXACTLY WHAT I WOULD EXPECT FROM A *RACIAL PARTISAN* -- STANDING IN THE WAY OF TURIAN DESTINY!
PERHAPS THE FEMALE WILL BE MORE REASONABLE.
EVA DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING. BUT EVEN IF SHE DID, SHE'S TOUGH -- AND COMMITTED. SHE WON'T CRACK FOR YOU. AND NEITHER WILL I.
YOU'RE A MAN OF SCIENCE, GENERAL, NOT MAGIC. IN THE ABSENCE OF RESULTS --
-- END THE EXPERIMENT.

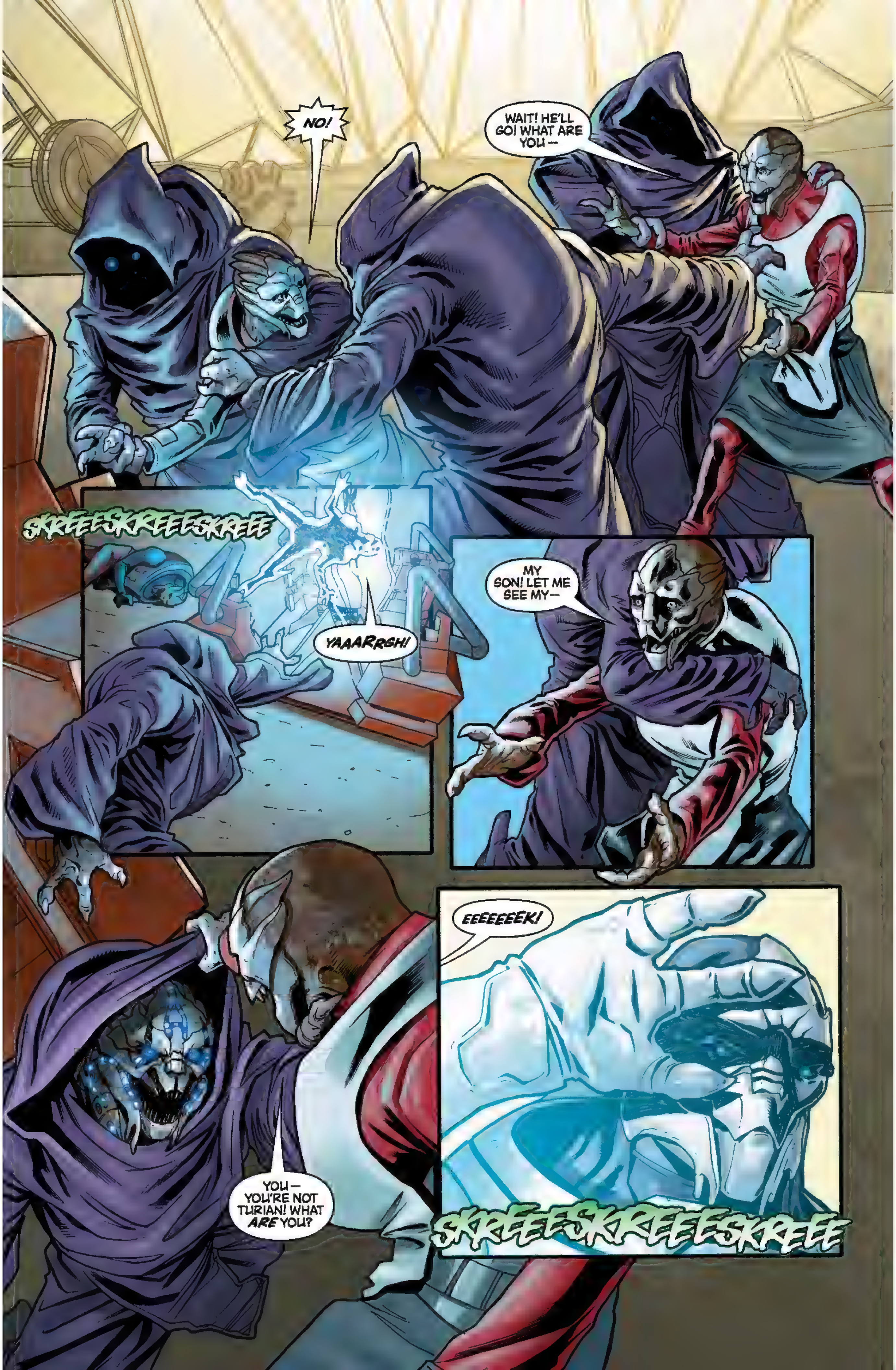

DAYS LATER...
I DON'T KNOW WHY THE GENERAL THOUGHT FURTHER OBSERVATION WOULD YIELD INFORMATION --
-- HE JUST SITS AND STARES. THE PEOPLE WHO BUILT THIS TEMPLE ARE MORE LIVELY -- AND THEY'VE BEEN DEAD FOR CENTURIES!
THAT'S IT.
THAT'S IT!
YES, JACK HARPER --

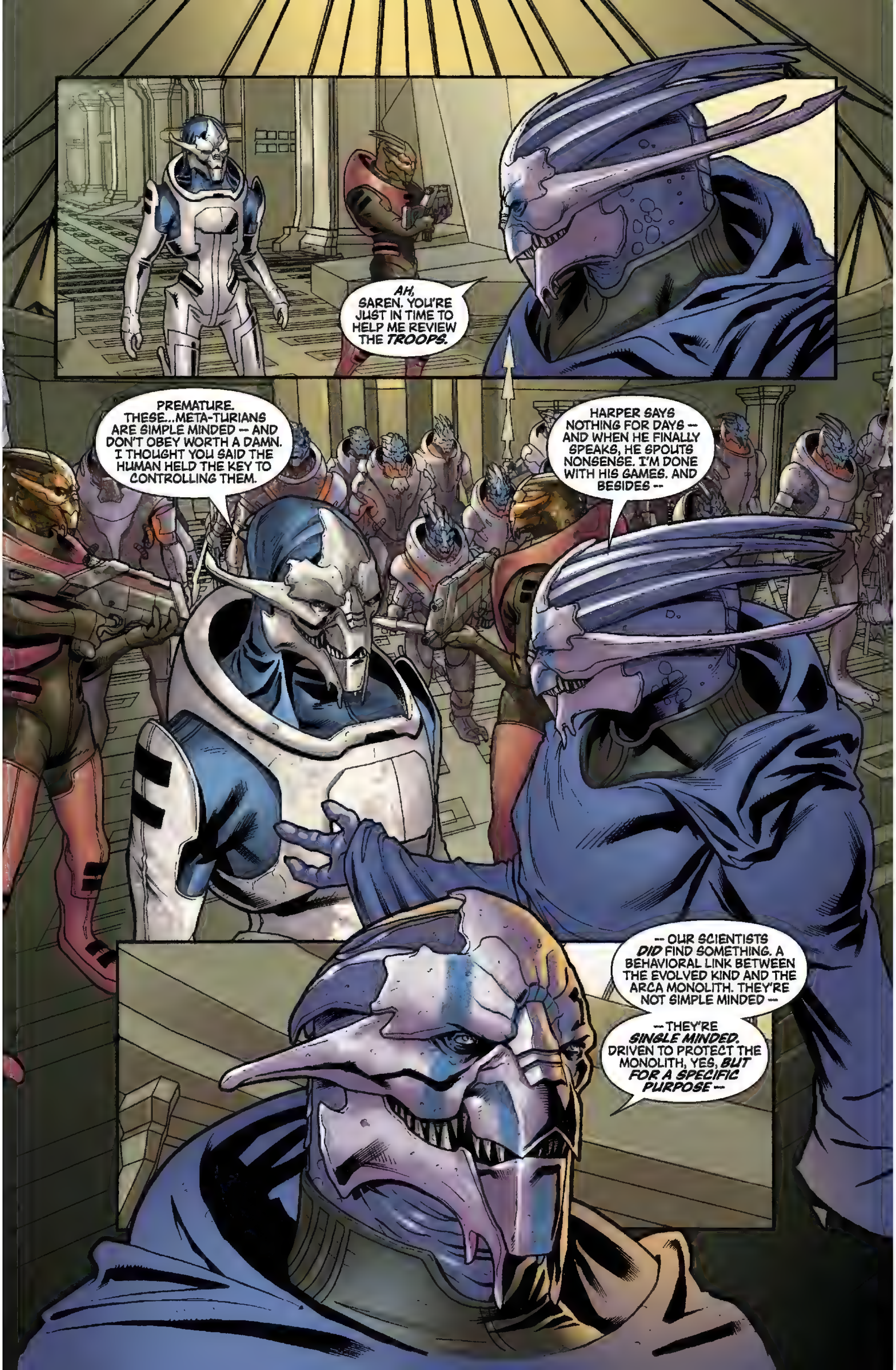

-- THAT *IS* IT. TODAY IS THE DAY. THE WAITING IS OVER. MY SCIENTISTS HAVE TOLD ME WHAT YOU WOULDN'T.
GUARDS, BRING HIM OUT. I WANT HIM TO SEE OUR FINDINGS IN APPLICATION.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
WE CAN'T FIND THE MECHANISM BY WHICH THE SO-CALLED PRIESTS ARE LINKED TO THE MONOLITH --
-- BUT IT IS ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT THEY *ARE*. THE BOND IS STRONG, TRANSCENDENTAL.
THEY WILL DO ANYTHING TO PROTECT IT -- AND TO SEE OTHERS BROUGHT TO IT. IF I BRING OTHERS TO IT --
-- THEY WILL DO ANYTHING FOR *ME*.
DESOLAS, WAIT! THERE'S SOMETHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT IT -- SOMETHING I'VE JUST REALIZED MYSELF! *THE TRUTH* --
THE TIME FOR TRUTH IS PAST. BEHOLD THE FUTURE!

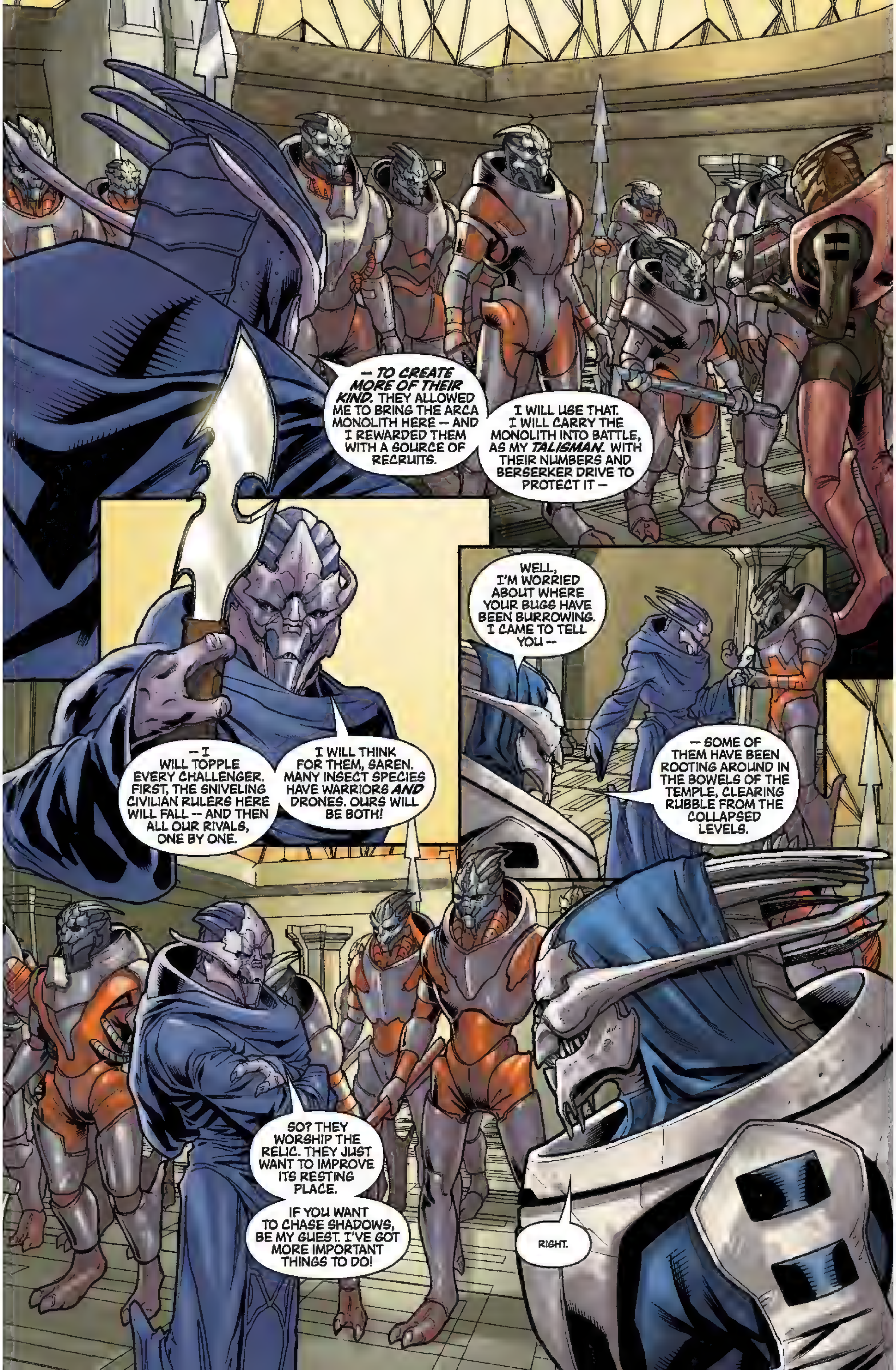

"IMAGINE A LEGION OF TURIANS -- EVOLVED TO A STATE OF ULTIMATE PHYSICAL PERFECTION. NEVER RESTING -- NEVER YIELDING!
"THE TIME FOR EQUALITY OF RACES IN THE CITADEL IS PAST. THE TURIAN DESTINY IS AT HAND. AND TONIGHT --
"-- IT BEGINS!"
SKREEESKREEESKREEE

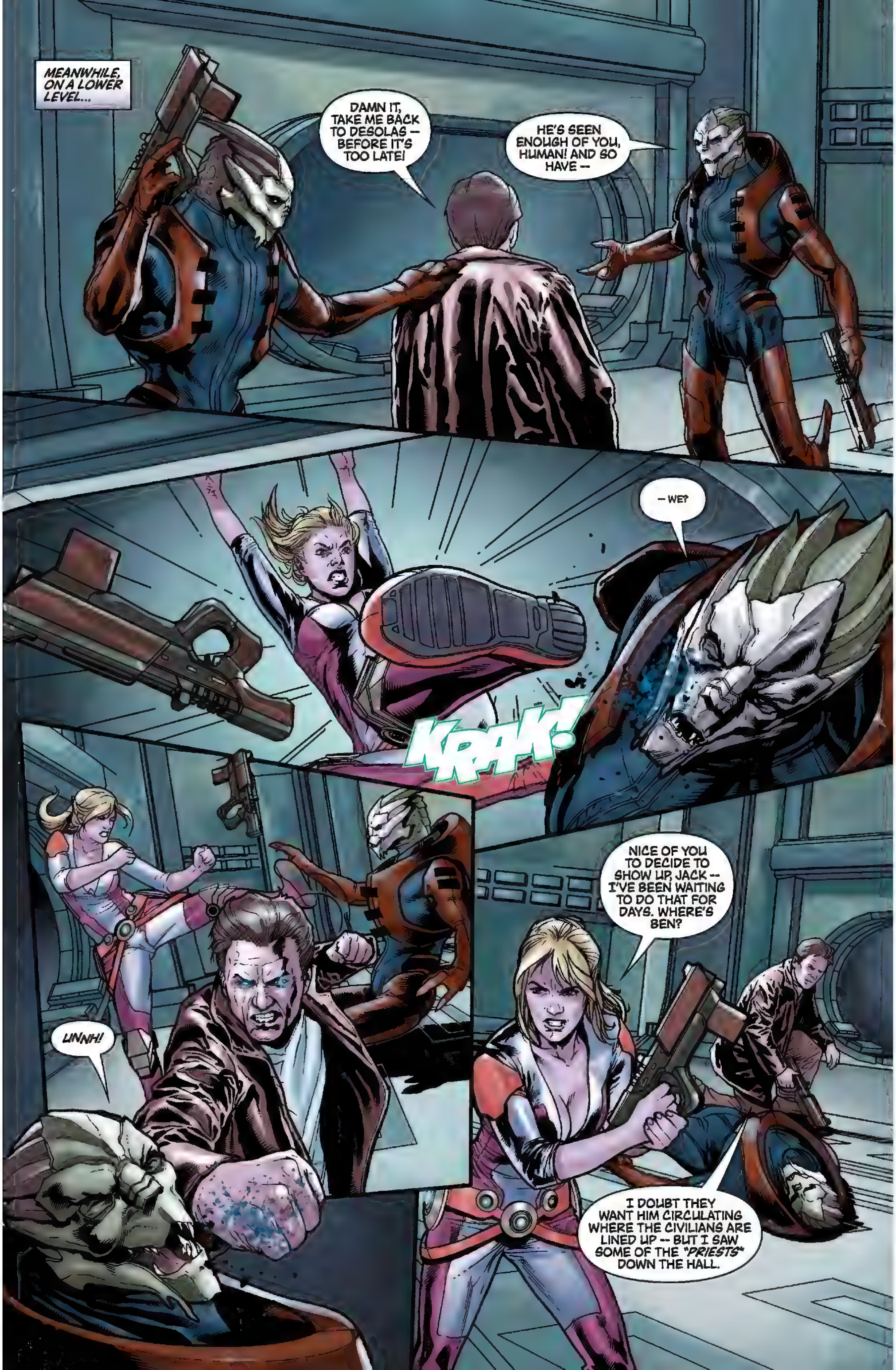

TEMPLE PALAVEN.
NO! YOU CAN'T DO THIS!
LISTEN TO ME! DESOLAS DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HE'S GOT HERE!
DON'T DO THIS! DON'T LET THEM GO IN!
HE'S SEEN WHAT MY BROTHER WANTED HIM TO SEE. FORGET THE OBSERVATION ROOM -- PUT HIM IN WITH THE *OTHER* ONE!
SAREN! YOU'VE GOT TO STOP THIS! DESOLAS DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HE'S DOING --
--BUT I DO!
FOR SOME, BEING THE BROTHER OF A FAMOUS GENERAL LIKE DESOLAS MIGHT BE A PATH TO CAREER SUCCESS --

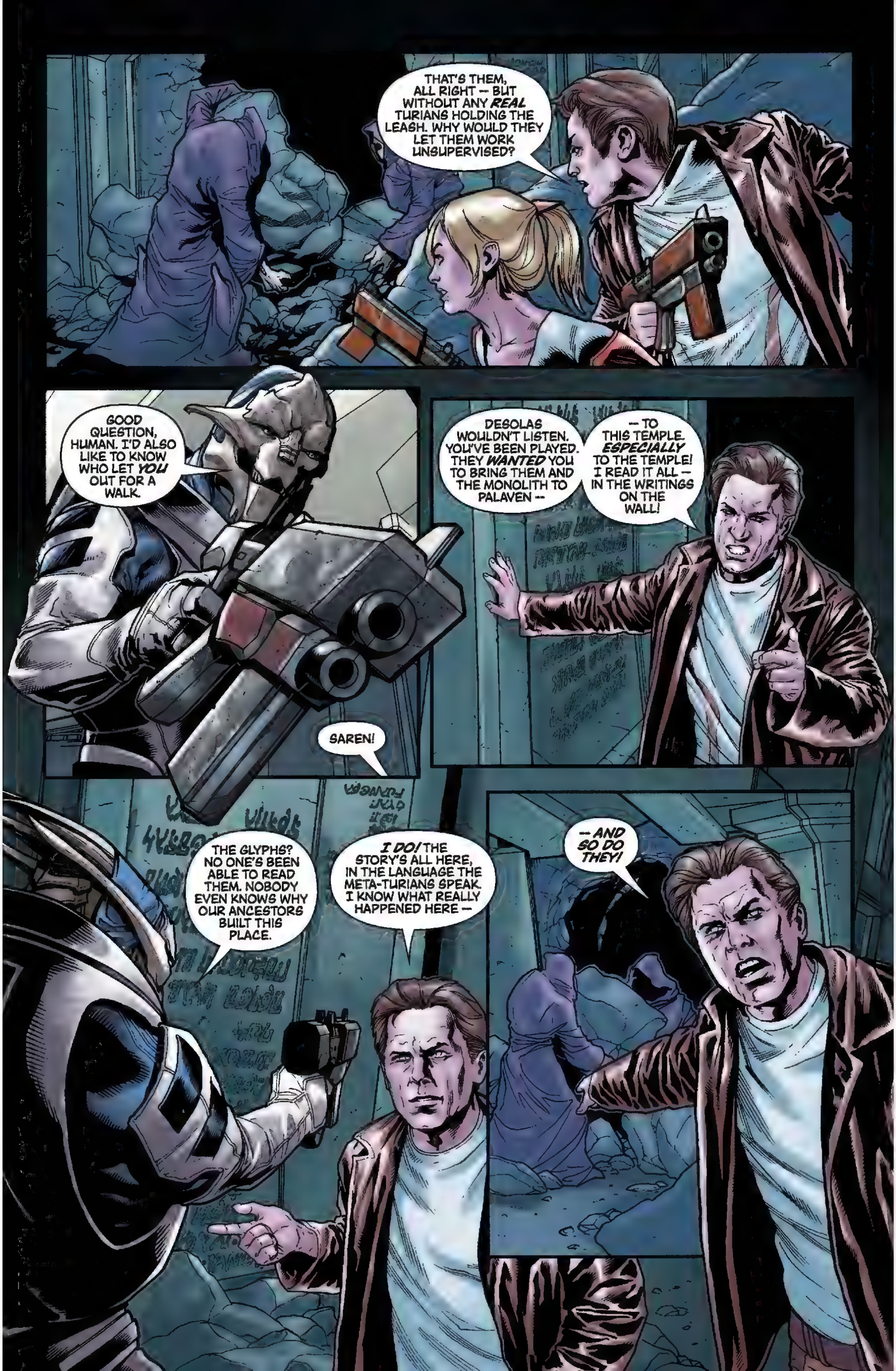

--BUT SAREN ARTERIUS HAS NEVER FOLLOWED IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OTHERS. DETERMINED AND INTREPID, HE WON HIS COVETED SLOT ON DESOLAS'S STAFF.
COLLEAGUES BRAGGED SAREN HAD NEVER MET ANY SITUATION BEYOND HIS CONTROL. SUCH IRONY, THEN, THAT HE WOULD FIND ONE --
-- BY GOING TO WORK FOR HIS BROTHER...
MOTHER, I DON'T LIKE THIS. THESE PEOPLE -- THEY DON'T LOOK RIGHT.
STAY STRONG, LAGRION. AVENGE YOUR FATHER. THERE WILL NEVER BE ANOTHER TURIAN LOST TO WAR IF YOU DO THIS. THE GENERAL HAS PROMISED --

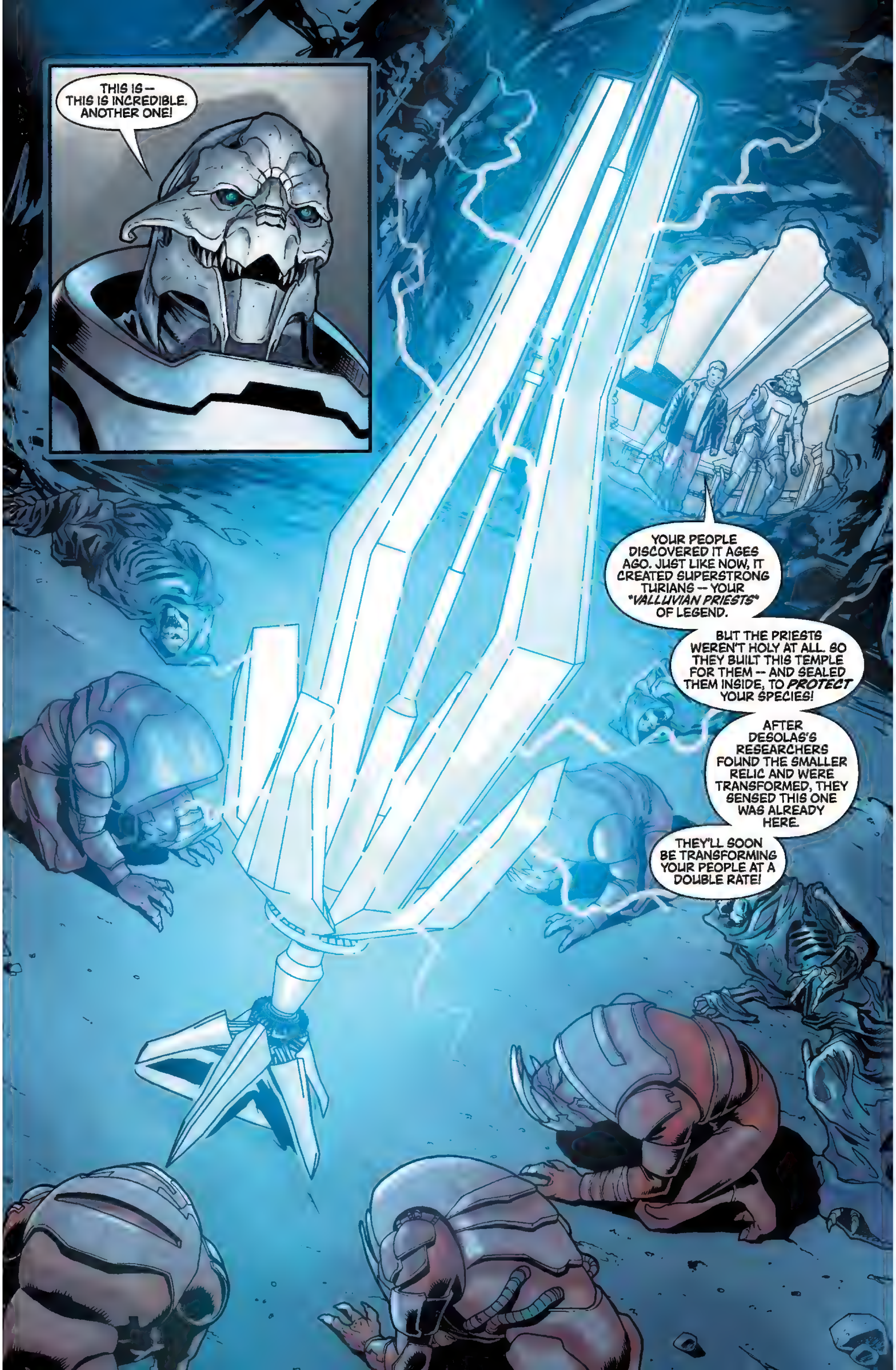

NO!
WAIT! HE'LL GO! WHAT ARE YOU --
SKREEESKREEESKREEE
YAAARRGH!
MY SON! LET ME SEE MY--
YOU— YOU'RE NOT TURIAN! WHAT *ARE* YOU?
EEEEEEEK!
SKREEESKREEESKREEE

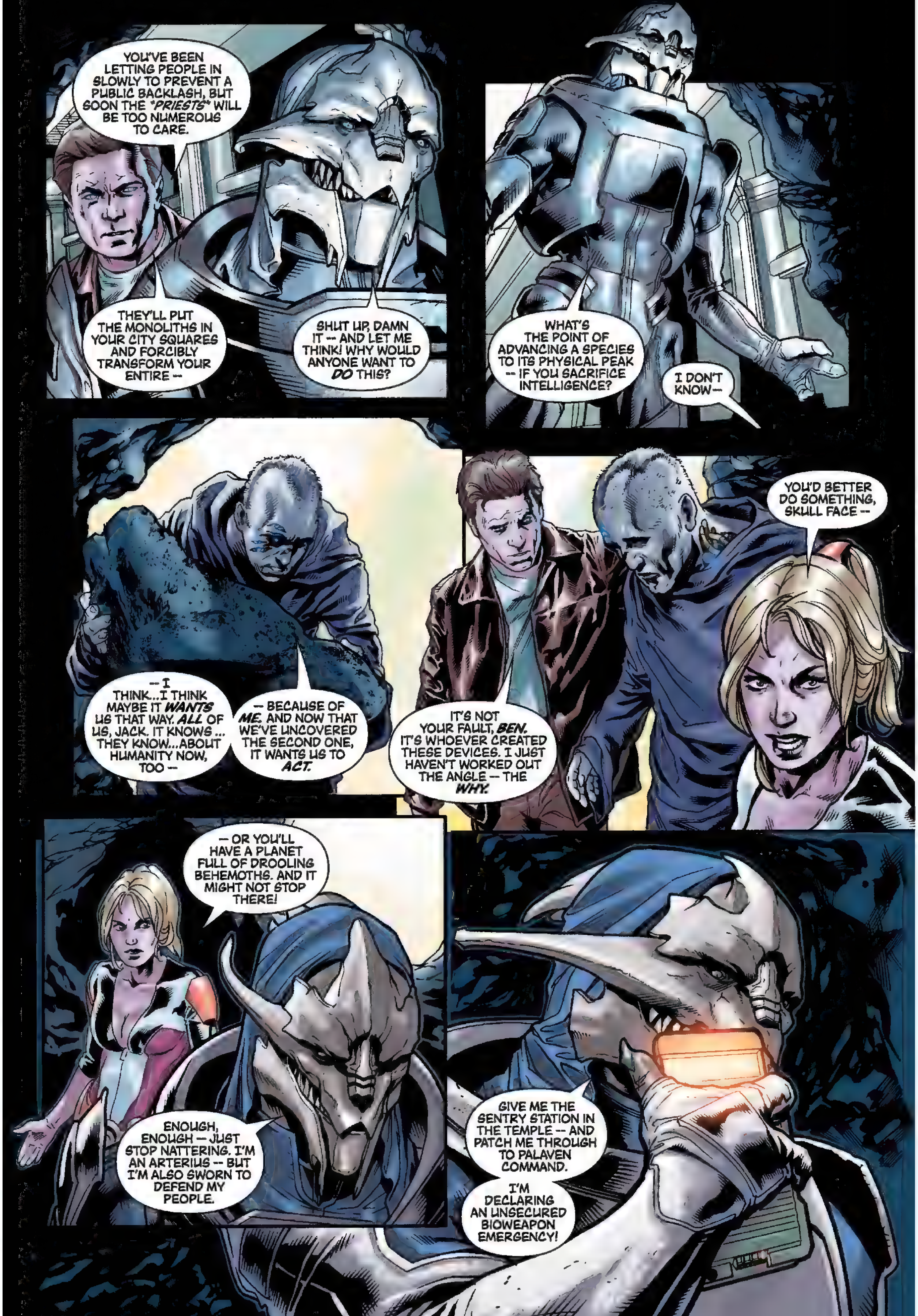

AH, SAREN. YOU'RE JUST IN TIME TO HELP ME REVIEW THE *TROOPS.*
PREMATURE. THESE...META-TURIANS ARE SIMPLE MINDED -- AND DON'T OBEY WORTH A DAMN. I THOUGHT YOU SAID THE HUMAN HELD THE KEY TO CONTROLLING THEM.
HARPER SAYS NOTHING FOR DAYS -- AND WHEN HE FINALLY SPEAKS, HE SPOUTS NONSENSE. I'M DONE WITH HIS GAMES. AND BESIDES --
-- OUR SCIENTISTS *DID* FIND SOMETHING. A BEHAVIORAL LINK BETWEEN THE EVOLVED KIND AND THE ARCA MONOLITH. THEY'RE NOT SIMPLE MINDED --
-- THEY'RE *SINGLE MINDED.* DRIVEN TO PROTECT THE MONOLITH, YES, *BUT FOR A SPECIFIC PURPOSE* --

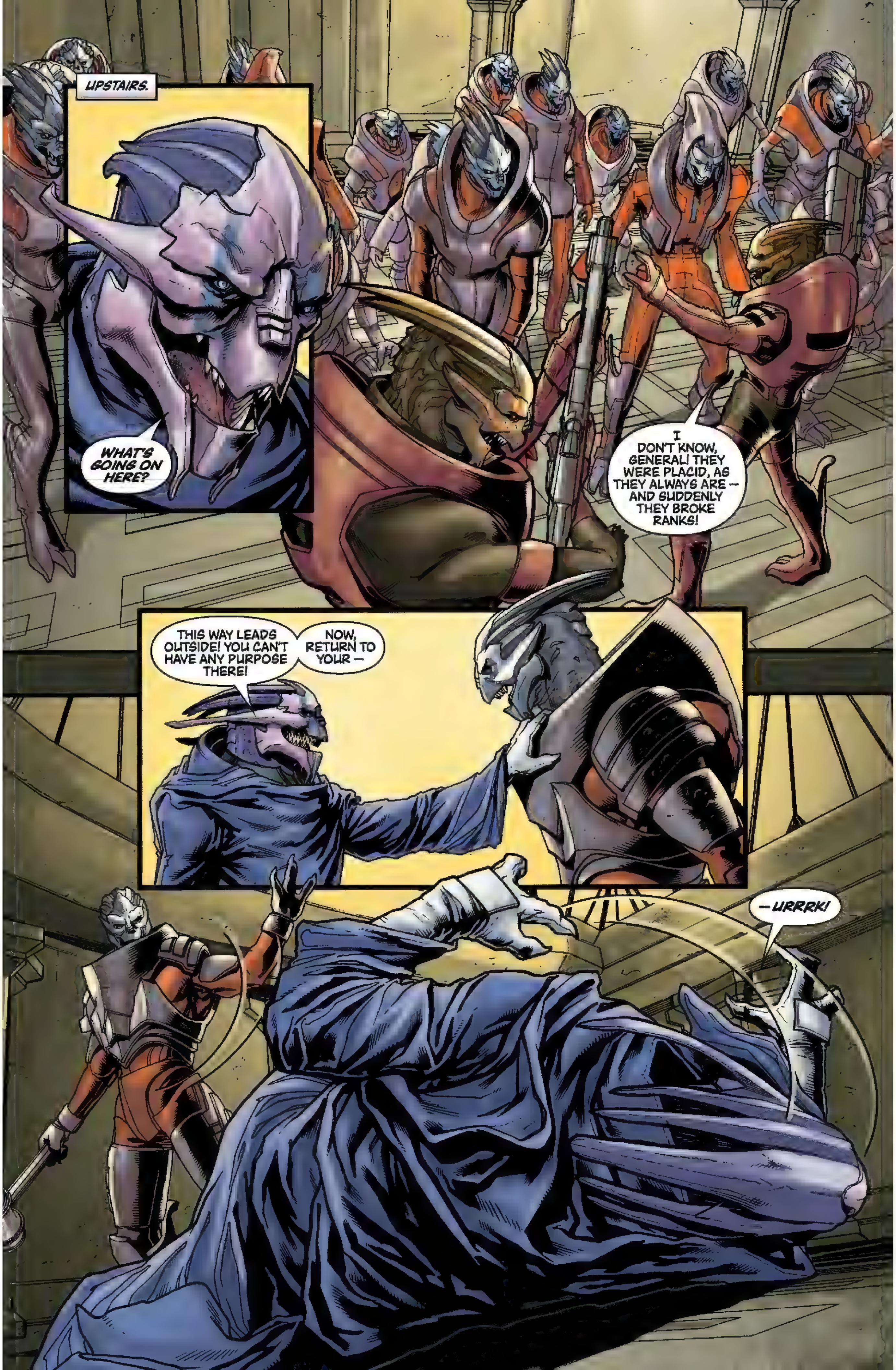

-- *TO CREATE MORE OF THEIR KIND.* THEY ALLOWED ME TO BRING THE ARCA MONOLITH HERE -- AND I REWARDED THEM WITH A SOURCE OF RECRUITS.
I WILL USE THAT. I WILL CARRY THE MONOLITH INTO BATTLE, AS MY *TALISMAN.* WITH THEIR NUMBERS AND BERSERKER DRIVE TO PROTECT IT --
-- I WILL TOPPLE EVERY CHALLENGER. FIRST, THE SNIVELING CIVILIAN RULERS HERE WILL FALL -- AND THEN ALL OUR RIVALS, ONE BY ONE.
I WILL THINK FOR THEM, SAREN. MANY INSECT SPECIES HAVE WARRIORS *AND* DRONES. OURS WILL BE BOTH!
WELL, I'M WORRIED ABOUT WHERE YOUR BUGS HAVE BEEN BURROWING. I CAME TO TELL YOU --
-- SOME OF THEM HAVE BEEN ROOTING AROUND IN THE BOWELS OF THE TEMPLE, CLEARING RUBBLE FROM THE COLLAPSED LEVELS.
SO? THEY WORSHIP THE RELIC. THEY JUST WANT TO IMPROVE ITS RESTING PLACE.
IF YOU WANT TO CHASE SHADOWS, BE MY GUEST. I'VE GOT MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO!
RIGHT.

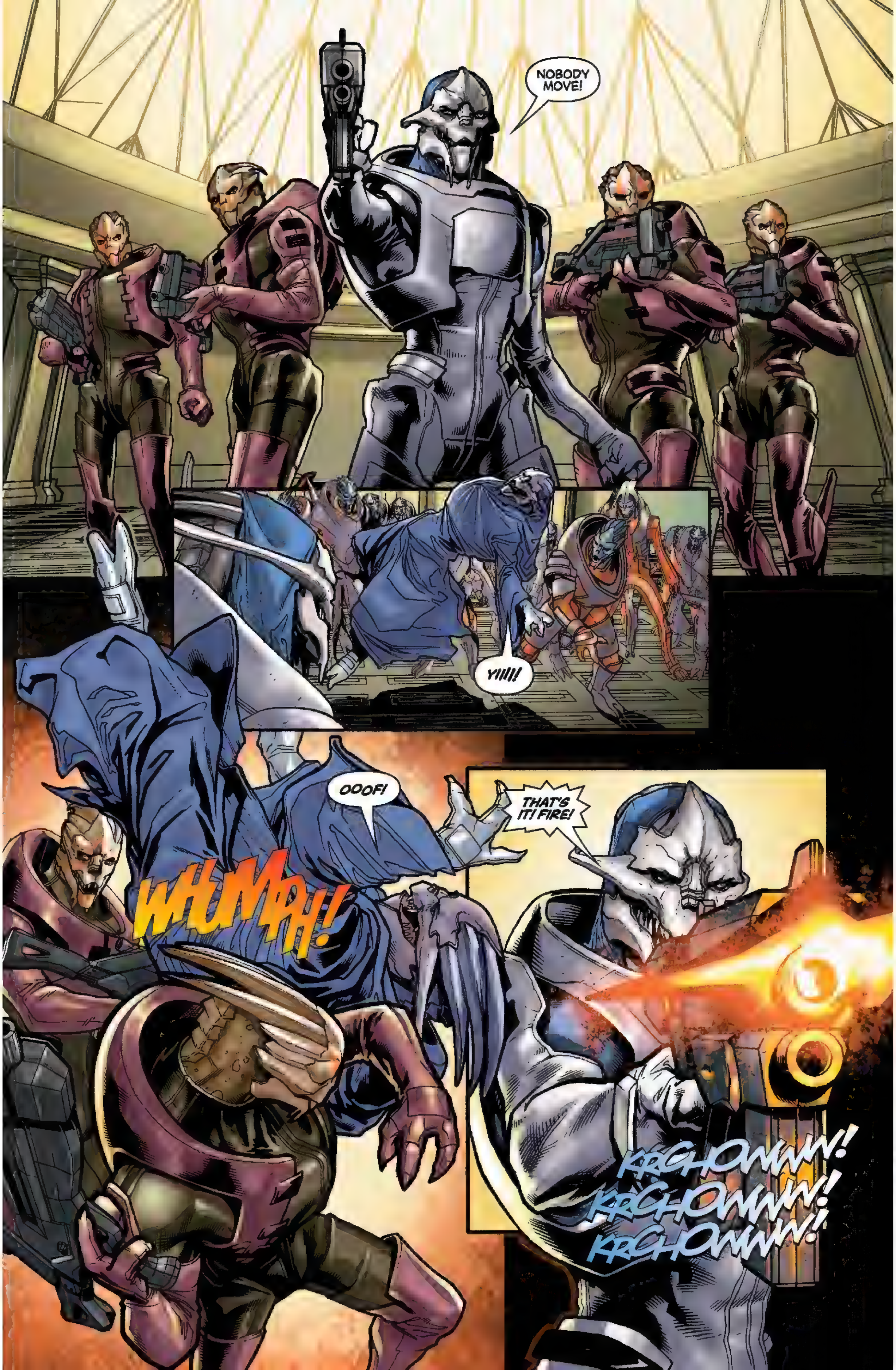

MEANWHILE, ON A LOWER LEVEL...
DAMN IT, TAKE ME BACK TO DESOLAS -- BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
HE'S SEEN ENOUGH OF YOU, HUMAN! AND SO HAVE --
-- WE?
KRAAK!
UNNH!
NICE OF YOU TO DECIDE TO SHOW UP, JACK -- I'VE BEEN WAITING TO DO THAT FOR DAYS. WHERE'S BEN?
I DOUBT THEY WANT HIM CIRCULATING WHERE THE CIVILIANS ARE LINED UP -- BUT I SAW SOME OF THE "PRIESTS" DOWN THE HALL.

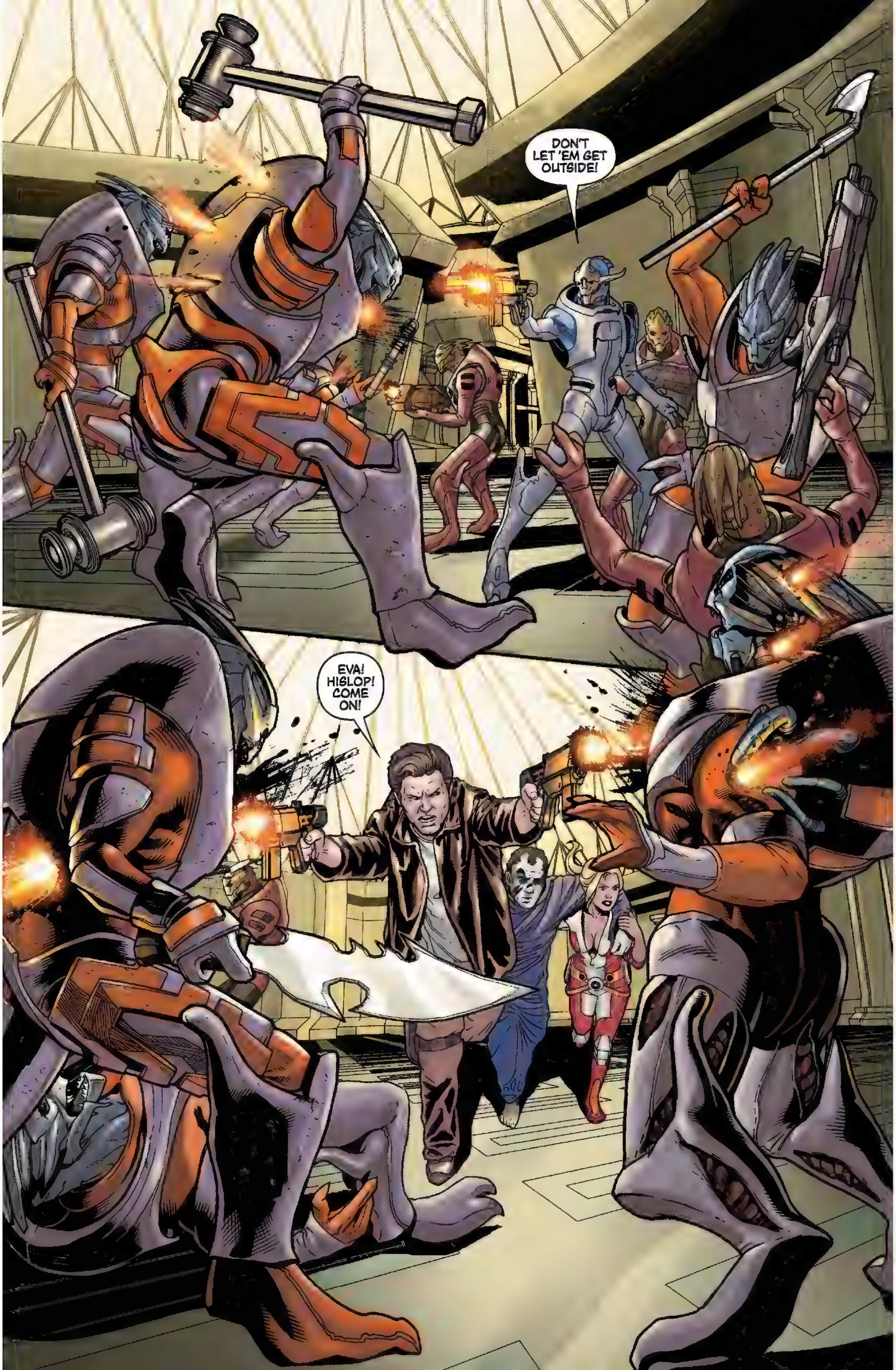

THAT'S THEM, ALL RIGHT -- BUT WITHOUT ANY *REAL* TURIANS HOLDING THE LEASH. WHY WOULD THEY LET THEM WORK UNSUPERVISED?
GOOD QUESTION, HUMAN. I'D ALSO LIKE TO KNOW WHO LET *YOU* OUT FOR A WALK.
DESOLAS WOULDN'T LISTEN. YOU'VE BEEN PLAYED. THEY *WANTED* YOU TO BRING THEM AND THE MONOLITH TO PALAVEN --
-- TO THIS TEMPLE. *ESPECIALLY* TO THE TEMPLE! I READ IT ALL -- IN THE WRITINGS ON THE WALL!
SAREN!
THE GLYPHS? NO ONE'S BEEN ABLE TO READ THEM. NOBODY EVEN KNOWS WHY OUR ANCESTORS BUILT THIS PLACE.
I DO! THE STORY'S ALL HERE, IN THE LANGUAGE THE META-TURIANS SPEAK. I KNOW WHAT REALLY HAPPENED HERE --
-- AND SO DO THEY!

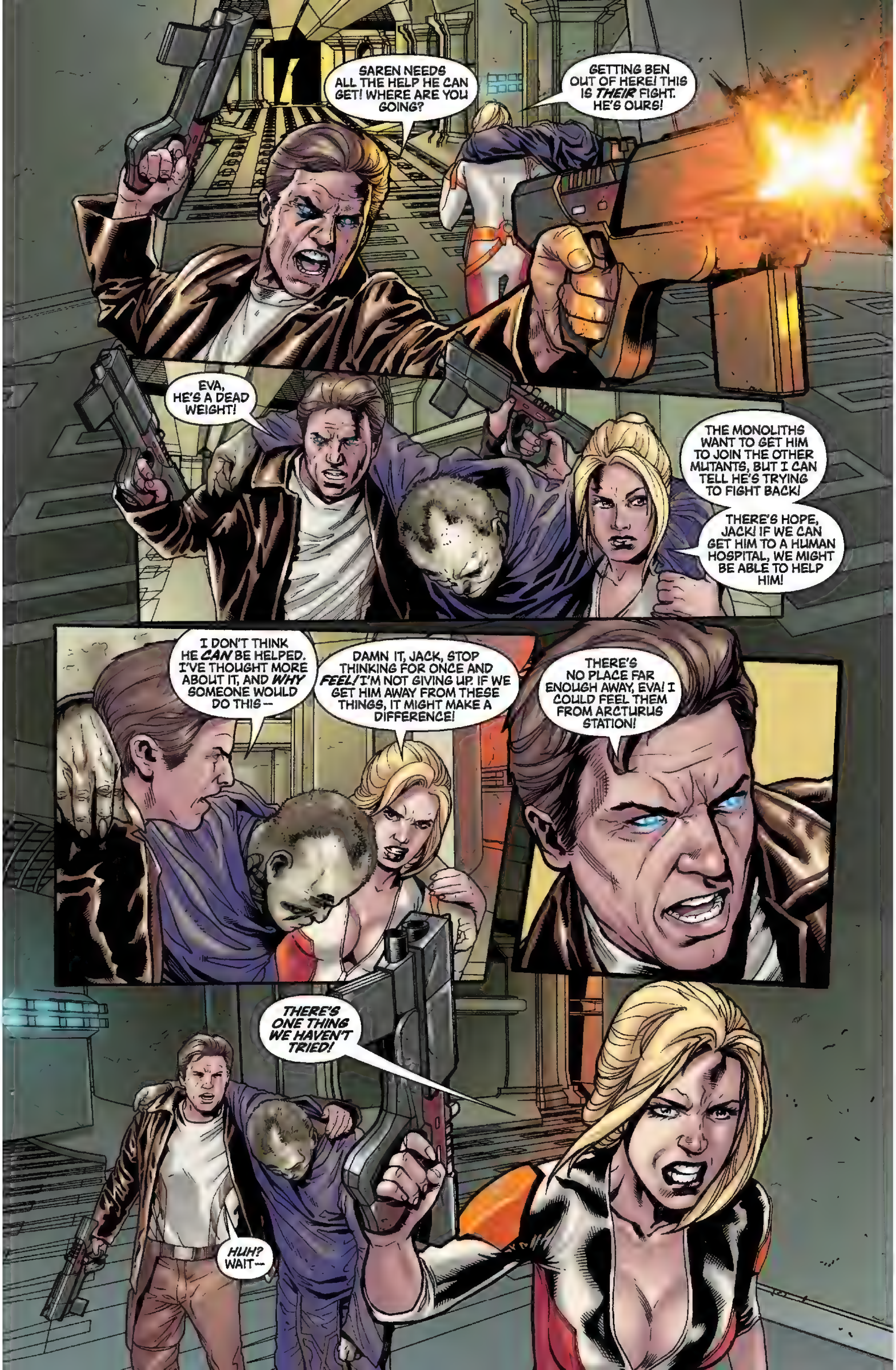

THIS IS -- THIS IS INCREDIBLE. ANOTHER ONE!
YOUR PEOPLE DISCOVERED IT AGES AGO. JUST LIKE NOW, IT CREATED SUPERSTRONG TURIANS -- YOUR *"VALLUVIAN PRIESTS"* OF LEGEND.
BUT THE PRIESTS WEREN'T HOLY AT ALL. SO THEY BUILT THIS TEMPLE FOR THEM -- AND SEALED THEM INSIDE, TO *PROTECT* YOUR SPECIES!
AFTER DESOLAS'S RESEARCHERS FOUND THE SMALLER RELIC AND WERE TRANSFORMED, THEY SENSED THIS ONE WAS ALREADY HERE.
THEY'LL SOON BE TRANSFORMING YOUR PEOPLE AT A DOUBLE RATE!

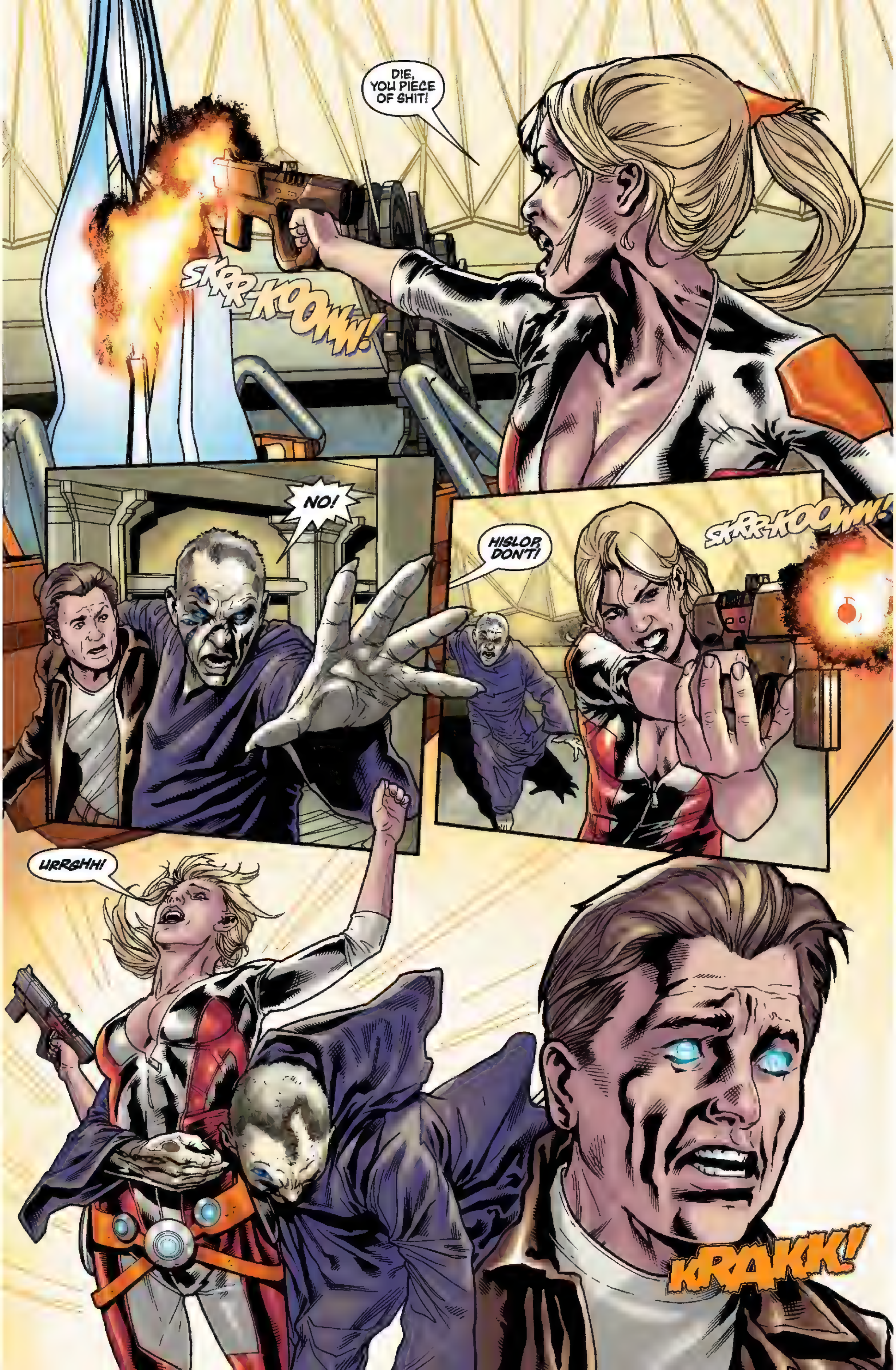

YOU'VE BEEN LETTING PEOPLE IN SLOWLY TO PREVENT A PUBLIC BACKLASH, BUT SOON THE *"PRIESTS"* WILL BE TOO NUMEROUS TO CARE.
THEY'LL PUT THE MONOLITHS IN YOUR CITY SQUARES AND FORCIBLY TRANSFORM YOUR ENTIRE --
SHUT UP, DAMN IT -- AND LET ME THINK! WHY WOULD ANYONE WANT TO *DO* THIS?
WHAT'S THE POINT OF ADVANCING A SPECIES TO ITS PHYSICAL PEAK -- IF YOU SACRIFICE INTELLIGENCE?
I DON'T KNOW--
-- I THINK...I THINK MAYBE IT *WANTS* US THAT WAY. *ALL* OF US, JACK. IT KNOWS ... THEY KNOW...ABOUT HUMANITY NOW, TOO --
-- BECAUSE OF *ME*. AND NOW THAT WE'VE UNCOVERED THE SECOND ONE, IT WANTS US TO *ACT*.
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT, *BEN*. IT'S WHOEVER CREATED THESE DEVICES. I JUST HAVEN'T WORKED OUT THE ANGLE -- THE *WHY*.
YOU'D BETTER DO SOMETHING, SKULL FACE --
-- OR YOU'LL HAVE A PLANET FULL OF DROOLING BEHEMOTHS. AND IT MIGHT NOT STOP THERE!
ENOUGH, ENOUGH -- JUST STOP NATTERING. I'M AN ARTERIUS -- BUT I'M ALSO SWORN TO DEFEND MY PEOPLE.
GIVE ME THE SENTRY STATION IN THE TEMPLE -- AND PATCH ME THROUGH TO PALAVEN COMMAND.
I'M DECLARING AN UNSECURED BIOWEAPON EMERGENCY!

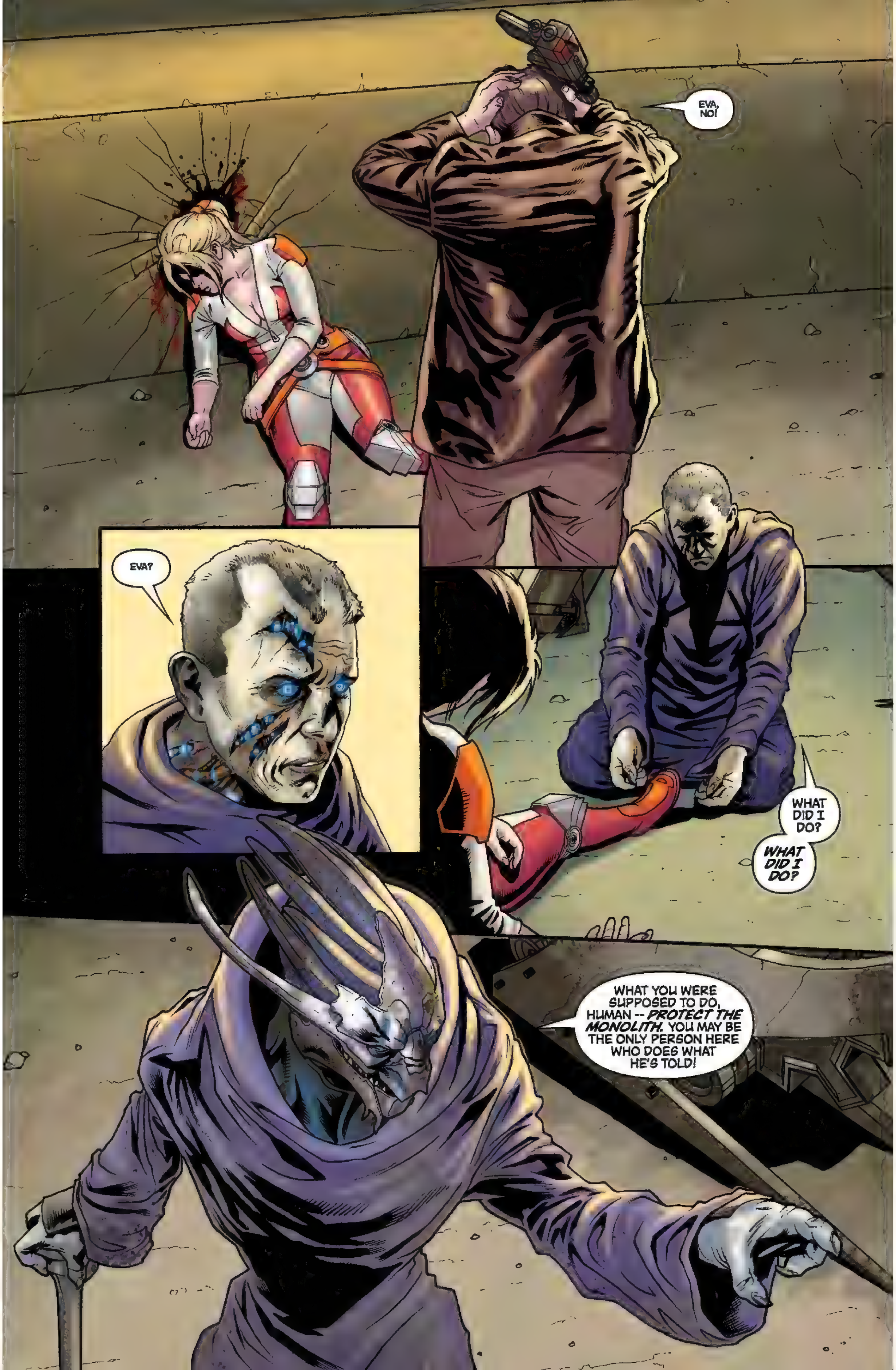

UPSTAIRS.
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
I DON'T KNOW, GENERAL! THEY WERE PLACID, AS THEY ALWAYS ARE -- AND SUDDENLY THEY BROKE RANKS!
THIS WAY LEADS OUTSIDE! YOU CAN'T HAVE ANY PURPOSE THERE!
NOW, RETURN TO YOUR --
--URRRK!

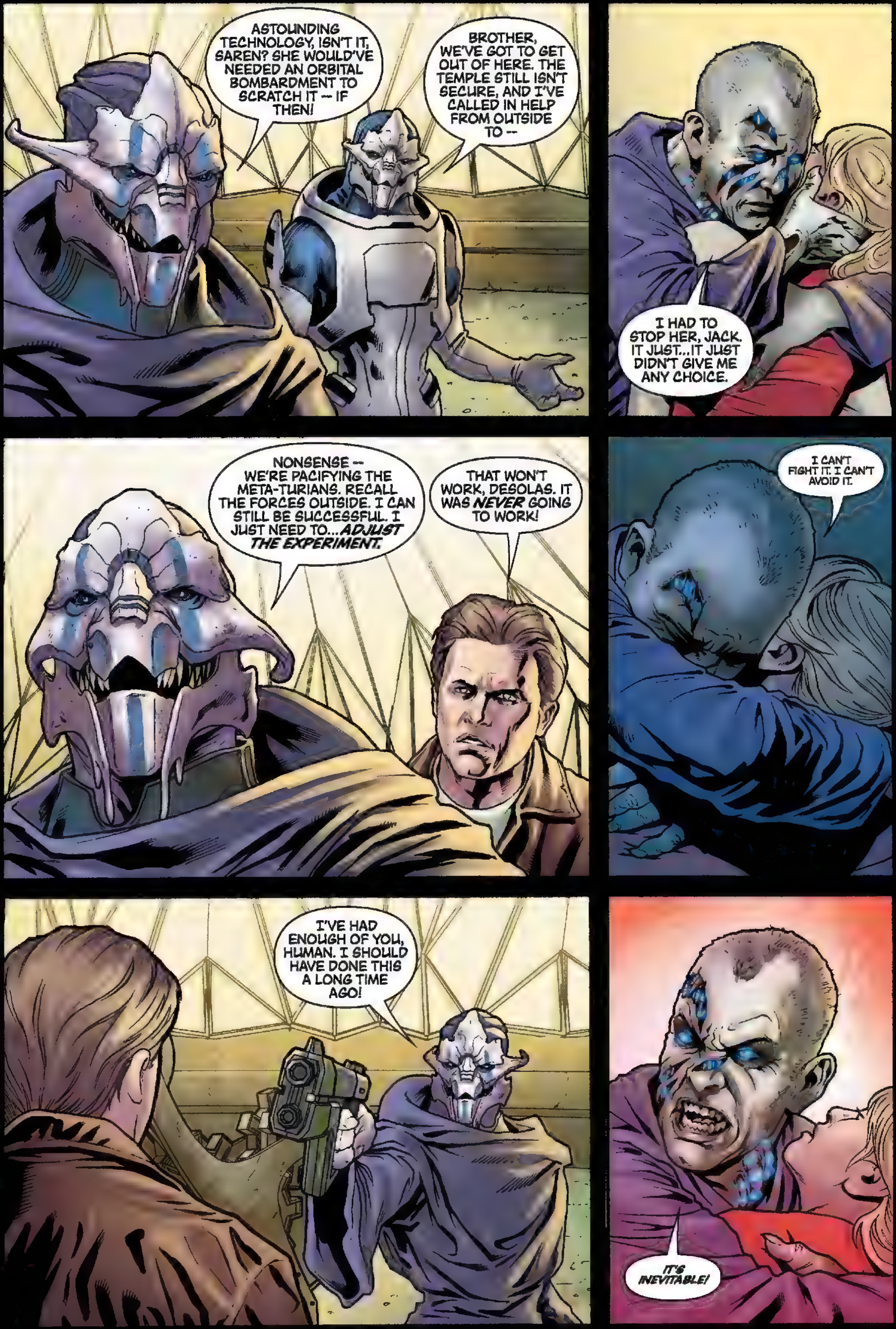

NOBODY MOVE!
YIIII!
OOOF!
WHUMPH!
THAT'S IT! FIRE!
KRGHOWWW!
KRGHOWWW!
KRGHOWWW!

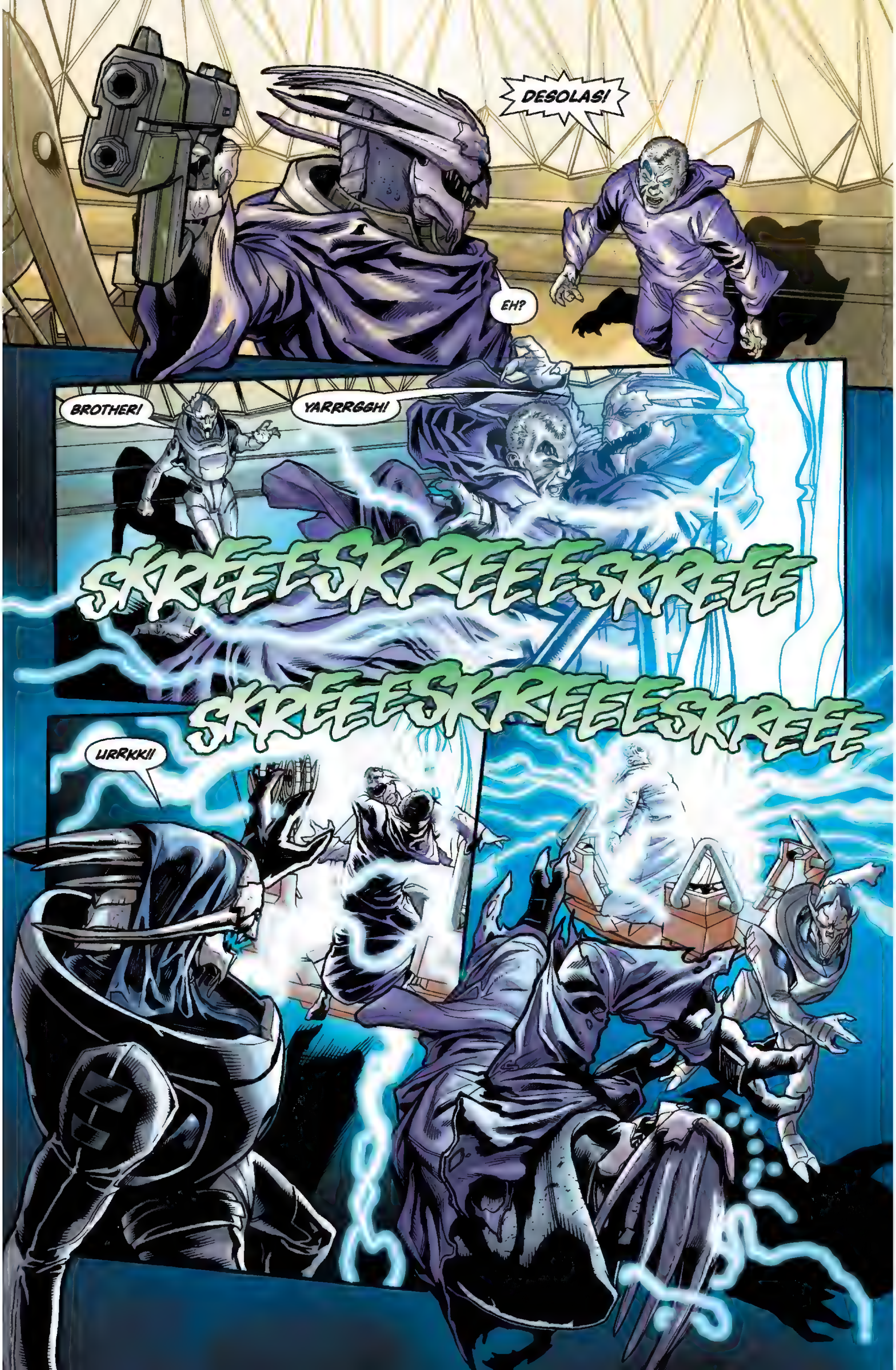

DON'T LET 'EM GET OUTSIDE!
EVA! HISLOP! COME ON!

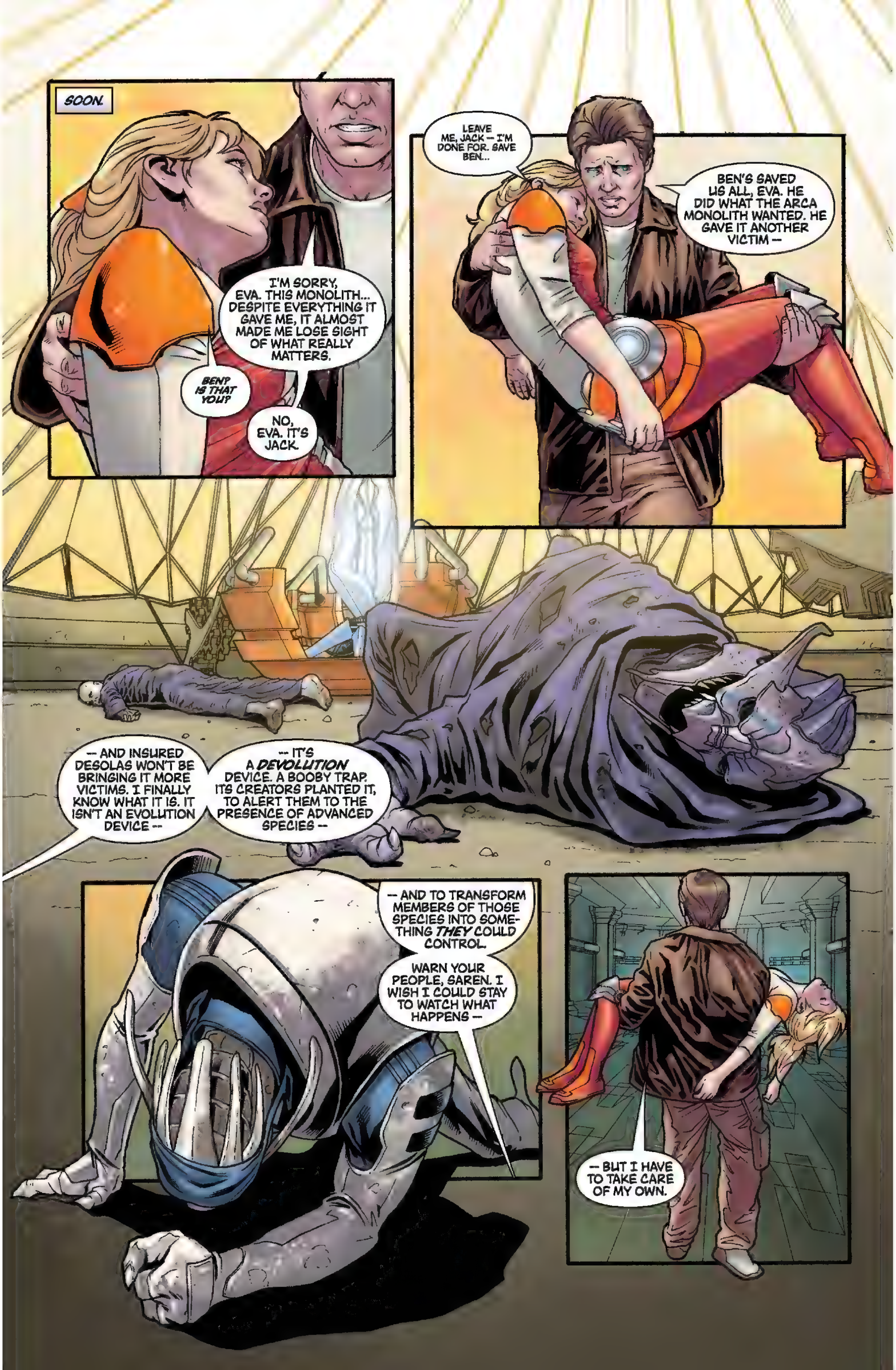

SAREN NEEDS ALL THE HELP HE CAN GET! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
GETTING BEN OUT OF HERE! THIS IS *THEIR* FIGHT. HE'S OURS!
EVA, HE'S A DEAD WEIGHT!
THE MONOLITHS WANT TO GET HIM TO JOIN THE OTHER MUTANTS, BUT I CAN TELL HE'S TRYING TO FIGHT BACK!
THERE'S HOPE, JACK! IF WE CAN GET HIM TO A HUMAN HOSPITAL, WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP HIM!
I DON'T THINK HE *CAN* BE HELPED. I'VE THOUGHT MORE ABOUT IT, AND *WHY* SOMEONE WOULD DO THIS—
DAMN IT, JACK, STOP THINKING FOR ONCE AND *FEEL!* I'M NOT GIVING UP. IF WE GET HIM AWAY FROM THESE THINGS, IT MIGHT MAKE A DIFFERENCE!
THERE'S NO PLACE FAR ENOUGH AWAY, EVA! I COULD FEEL THEM FROM ARCTURUS STATION!
THERE'S ONE THING WE HAVEN'T TRIED!
HUH? WAIT—

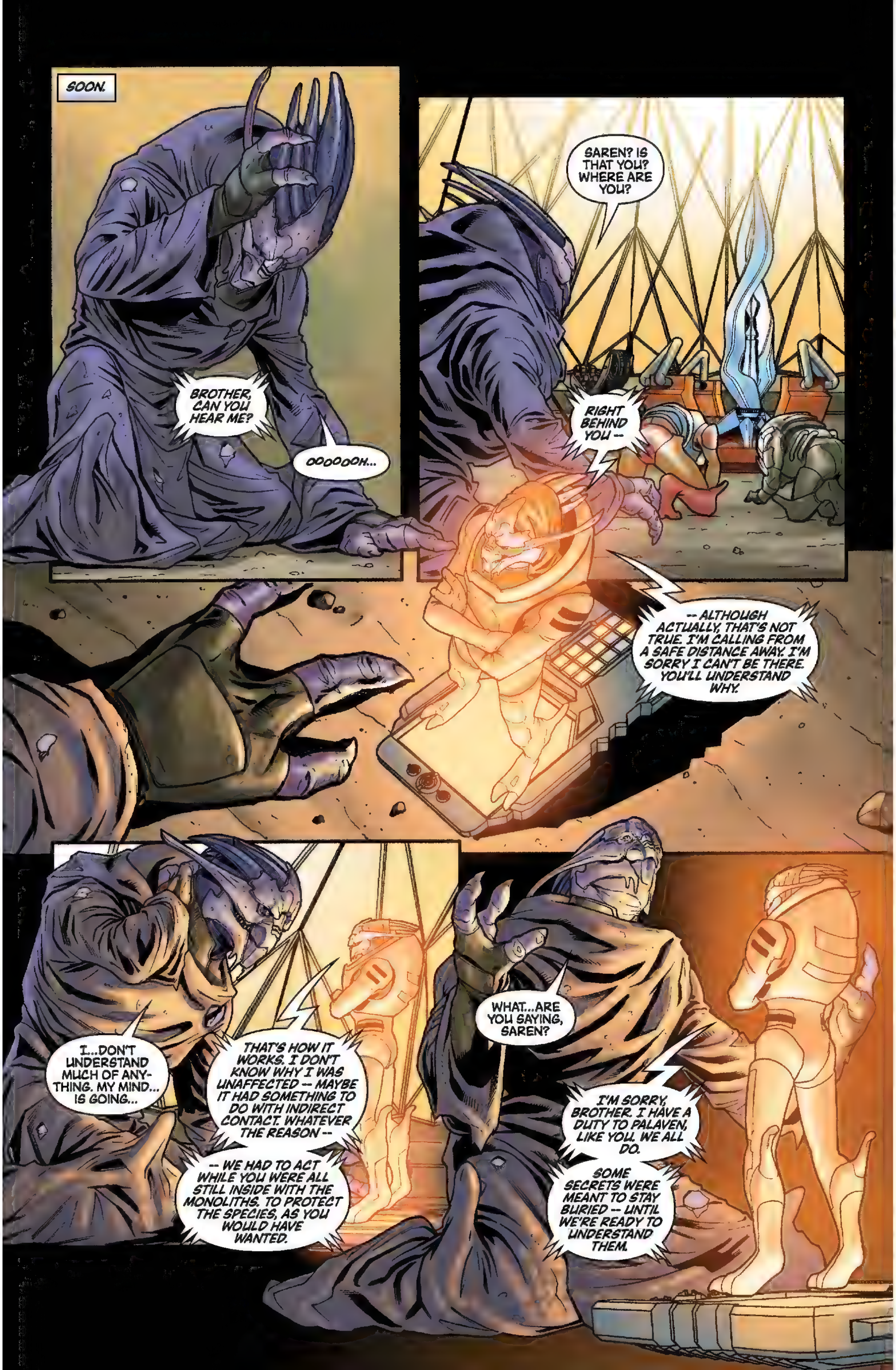

DIE, YOU PIECE OF SHIT!
SKRR-KOOMW!
NO!
HISLOP, DON'T!
SKRR-KOOMW!
URRGHH!
KRAKK!

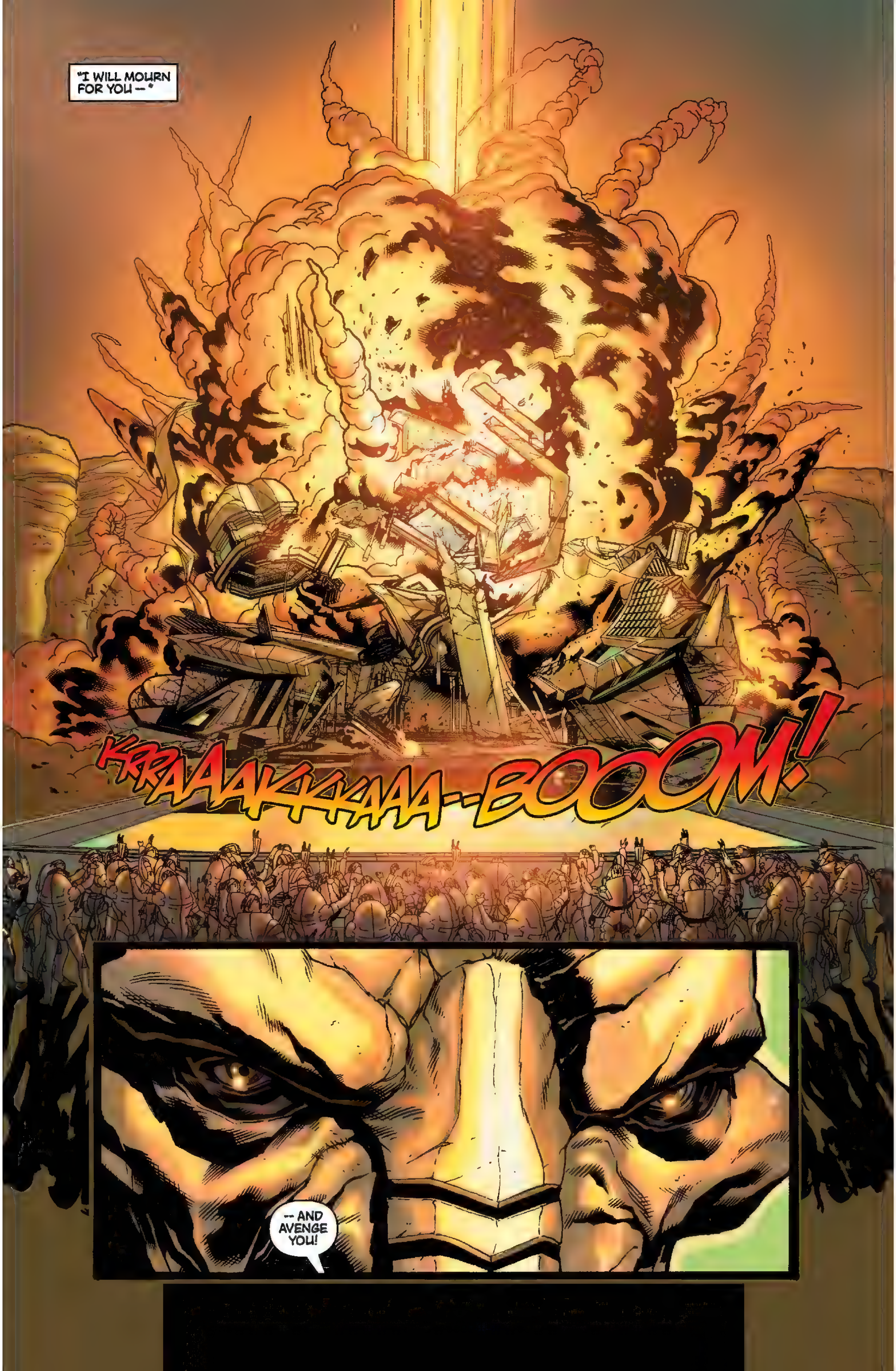

EVA, NO!
EVA?
WHAT DID I DO?
WHAT DID I DO?
WHAT YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO DO, HUMAN -- ***PROTECT THE MONOLITH.*** YOU MAY BE THE ONLY PERSON HERE WHO DOES WHAT HE'S TOLD!

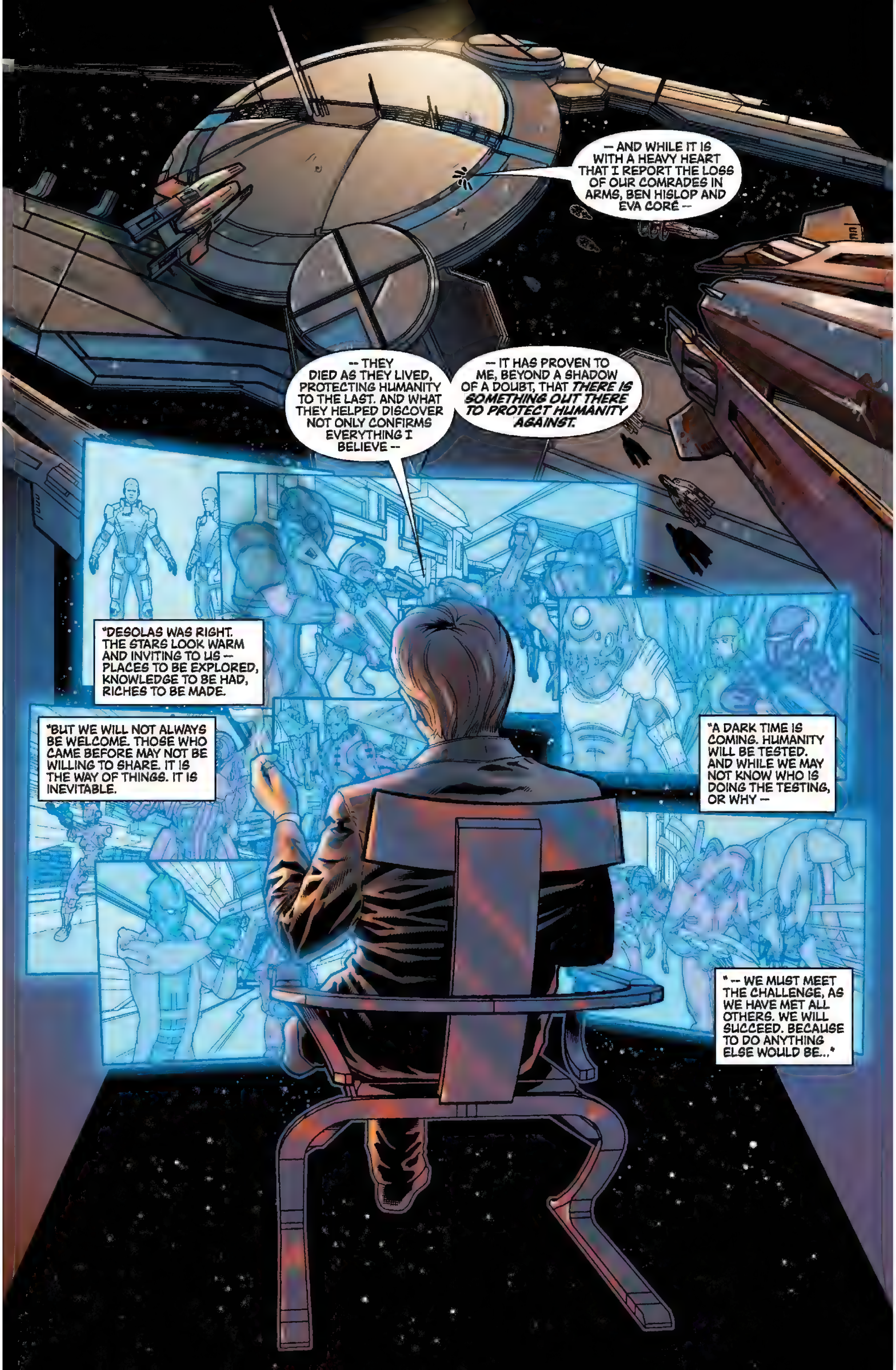

ASTOUNDING TECHNOLOGY, ISN'T IT, SAREN? SHE WOULD'VE NEEDED AN ORBITAL BOMBARDMENT TO SCRATCH IT -- IF THEN!
BROTHER, WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE. THE TEMPLE STILL ISN'T SECURE, AND I'VE CALLED IN HELP FROM OUTSIDE TO --
I HAD TO STOP HER, JACK. IT JUST...IT JUST DIDN'T GIVE ME ANY CHOICE.
NONSENSE -- WE'RE PACIFYING THE META-TURIANS. RECALL THE FORCES OUTSIDE. I CAN STILL BE SUCCESSFUL. I JUST NEED TO...*ADJUST THE EXPERIMENT.*
THAT WON'T WORK, DESOLAS. IT WAS *NEVER* GOING TO WORK!
I CAN'T FIGHT IT. I CAN'T AVOID IT.
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOU, HUMAN. I SHOULD HAVE DONE THIS A LONG TIME AGO!
IT'S INEVITABLE!


DESOLAS!
EH?
BROTHER!
YARRRGGH!
SKREEESKREEESKREEE
SKREEESKREEESKREEE
URRKK!!


SOON.
I'M SORRY, EVA. THIS MONOLITH... DESPITE EVERYTHING IT GAVE ME, IT ALMOST MADE ME LOSE SIGHT OF WHAT REALLY MATTERS.
BEN? IS THAT YOU?
NO, EVA. IT'S JACK.
LEAVE ME, JACK -- I'M DONE FOR. SAVE BEN...
BEN'S SAVED US ALL, EVA. HE DID WHAT THE ARCA MONOLITH WANTED. HE GAVE IT ANOTHER VICTIM --
-- AND INSURED DESOLAS WON'T BE BRINGING IT MORE VICTIMS. I FINALLY KNOW WHAT IT IS. IT ISN'T AN EVOLUTION DEVICE --
-- IT'S A *DEVOLUTION* DEVICE. A BOOBY TRAP. ITS CREATORS PLANTED IT, TO ALERT THEM TO THE PRESENCE OF ADVANCED SPECIES --
-- AND TO TRANSFORM MEMBERS OF THOSE SPECIES INTO SOMETHING *THEY* COULD CONTROL.
WARN YOUR PEOPLE, SAREN. I WISH I COULD STAY TO WATCH WHAT HAPPENS --
-- BUT I HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF MY OWN.


SOON.
BROTHER, CAN YOU HEAR ME?
OOOOOOH...
SAREN? IS THAT YOU? WHERE ARE YOU?
RIGHT BEHIND YOU --
-- ALTHOUGH ACTUALLY, THAT'S NOT TRUE. I'M CALLING FROM A SAFE DISTANCE AWAY. I'M SORRY I CAN'T BE THERE. YOU'LL UNDERSTAND WHY.
I...DON'T UNDERSTAND MUCH OF ANYTHING. MY MIND... IS GOING...
THAT'S HOW IT WORKS. I DON'T KNOW WHY I WAS UNAFFECTED -- MAYBE IT HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH INDIRECT CONTACT. WHATEVER THE REASON --
-- WE HAD TO ACT WHILE YOU WERE ALL STILL INSIDE WITH THE MONOLITHS. TO PROTECT THE SPECIES, AS YOU WOULD HAVE WANTED.
WHAT...ARE YOU SAYING, SAREN?
I'M SORRY, BROTHER. I HAVE A DUTY TO PALAVEN, LIKE YOU. WE ALL DO.
SOME SECRETS WERE MEANT TO STAY BURIED -- UNTIL WE'RE READY TO UNDERSTAND THEM.


"I WILL MOURN FOR YOU --"
KRRAAAKKKAAA--BOOOM!
-- AND AVENGE YOU!


-- AND WHILE IT IS WITH A HEAVY HEART THAT I REPORT THE LOSS OF OUR COMRADES IN ARMS, BEN HISLOP AND EVA CORE --
-- THEY DIED AS THEY LIVED, PROTECTING HUMANITY TO THE LAST. AND WHAT THEY HELPED DISCOVER NOT ONLY CONFIRMS EVERYTHING I BELIEVE --
-- IT HAS PROVEN TO ME, BEYOND A SHADOW OF A DOUBT, THAT *THERE IS SOMETHING OUT THERE TO PROTECT HUMANITY AGAINST.*
"DESOLAS WAS RIGHT. THE STARS LOOK WARM AND INVITING TO US -- PLACES TO BE EXPLORED, KNOWLEDGE TO BE HAD, RICHES TO BE MADE.
"BUT WE WILL NOT ALWAYS BE WELCOME. THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE MAY NOT BE WILLING TO SHARE. IT IS THE WAY OF THINGS. IT IS INEVITABLE.
"A DARK TIME IS COMING. HUMANITY WILL BE TESTED. AND WHILE WE MAY NOT KNOW WHO IS DOING THE TESTING, OR WHY --
" -- WE MUST MEET THE CHALLENGE, AS WE HAVE MET ALL OTHERS. WE WILL SUCCEED. BECAUSE TO DO ANYTHING ELSE WOULD BE..."

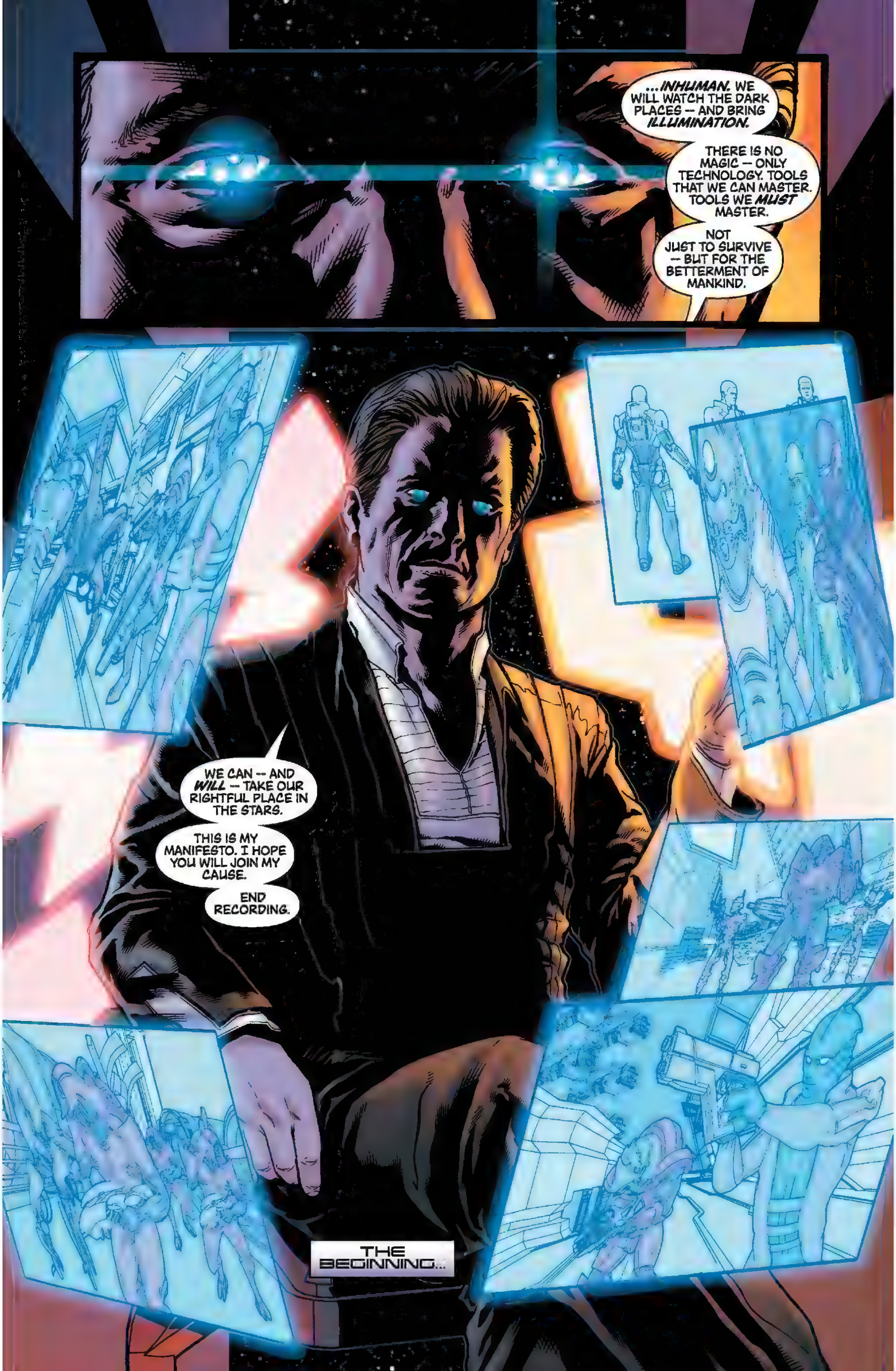

...*INHUMAN.* WE WILL WATCH THE DARK PLACES -- AND BRING *ILLUMINATION.*
THERE IS NO MAGIC -- ONLY TECHNOLOGY. TOOLS THAT WE CAN MASTER. TOOLS WE *MUST* MASTER.
NOT JUST TO SURVIVE -- BUT FOR THE BETTERMENT OF MANKIND.
WE CAN -- AND *WILL* -- TAKE OUR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN THE STARS.
THIS IS MY MANIFESTO. I HOPE YOU WILL JOIN MY CAUSE.
END RECORDING.
THE BEGINNING...

Illustration by Massimo Carnevale

INVASION

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Omar Francia

COLORS
Michael Atiyeh

LETTERING
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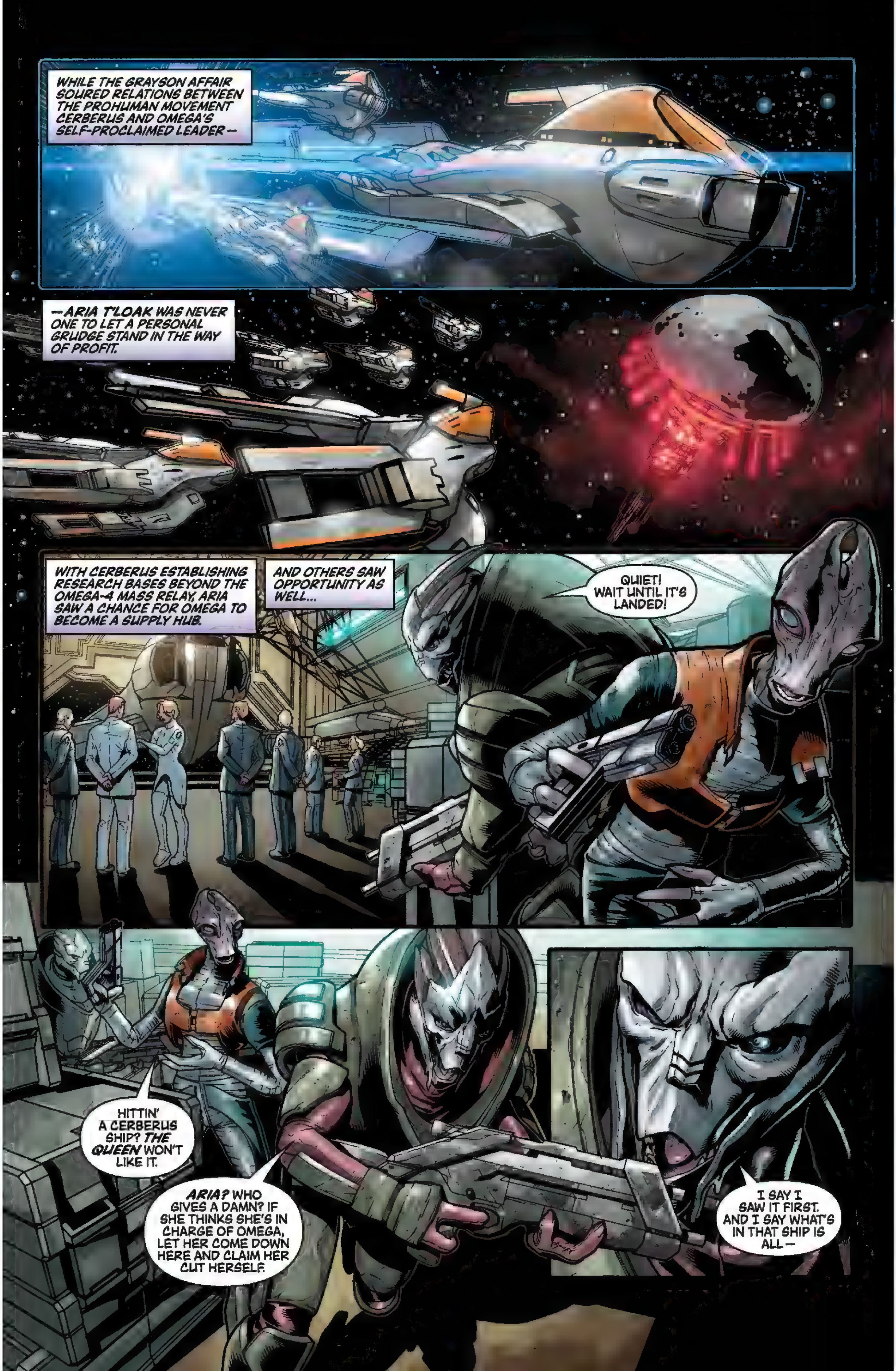
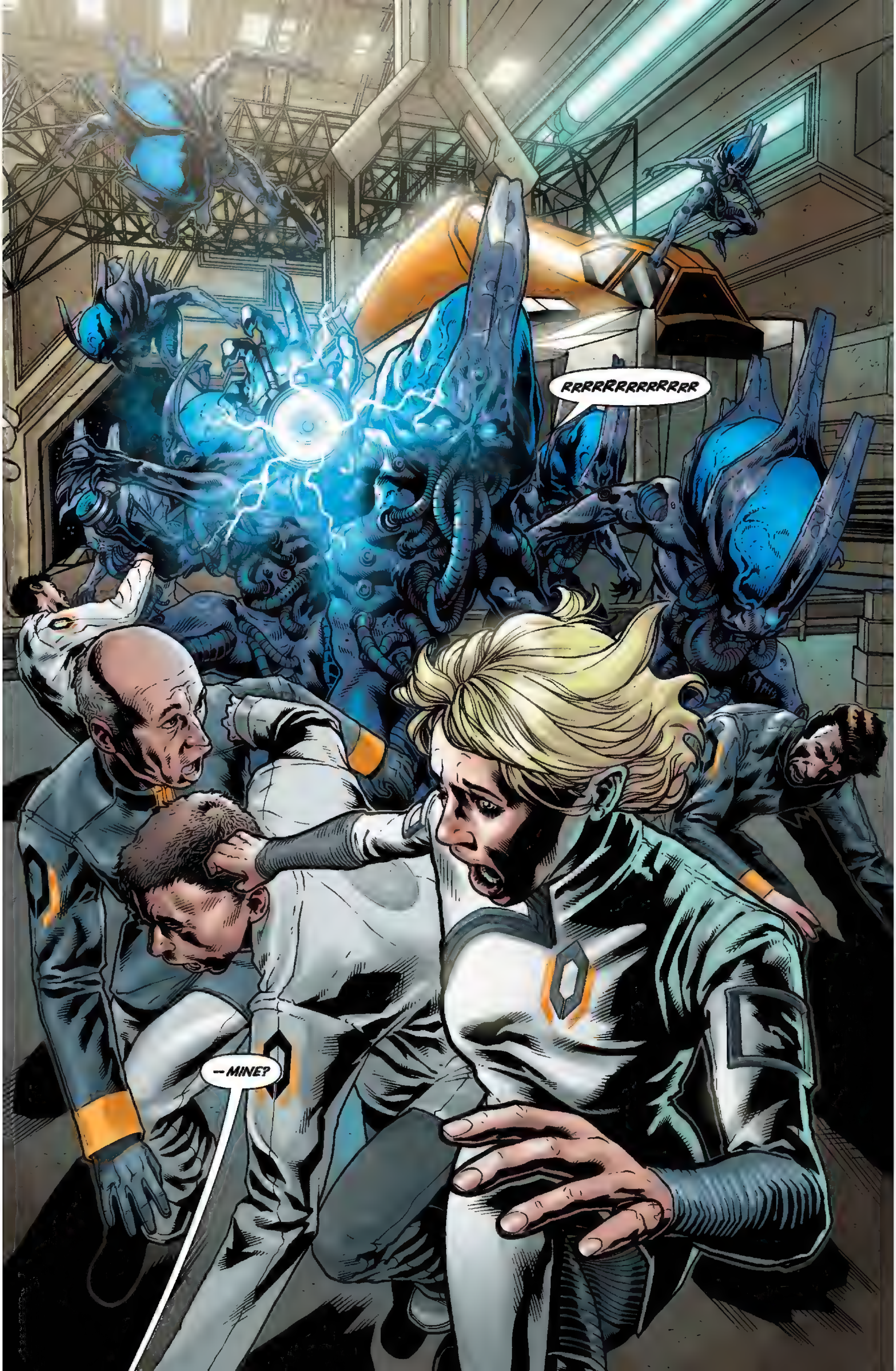
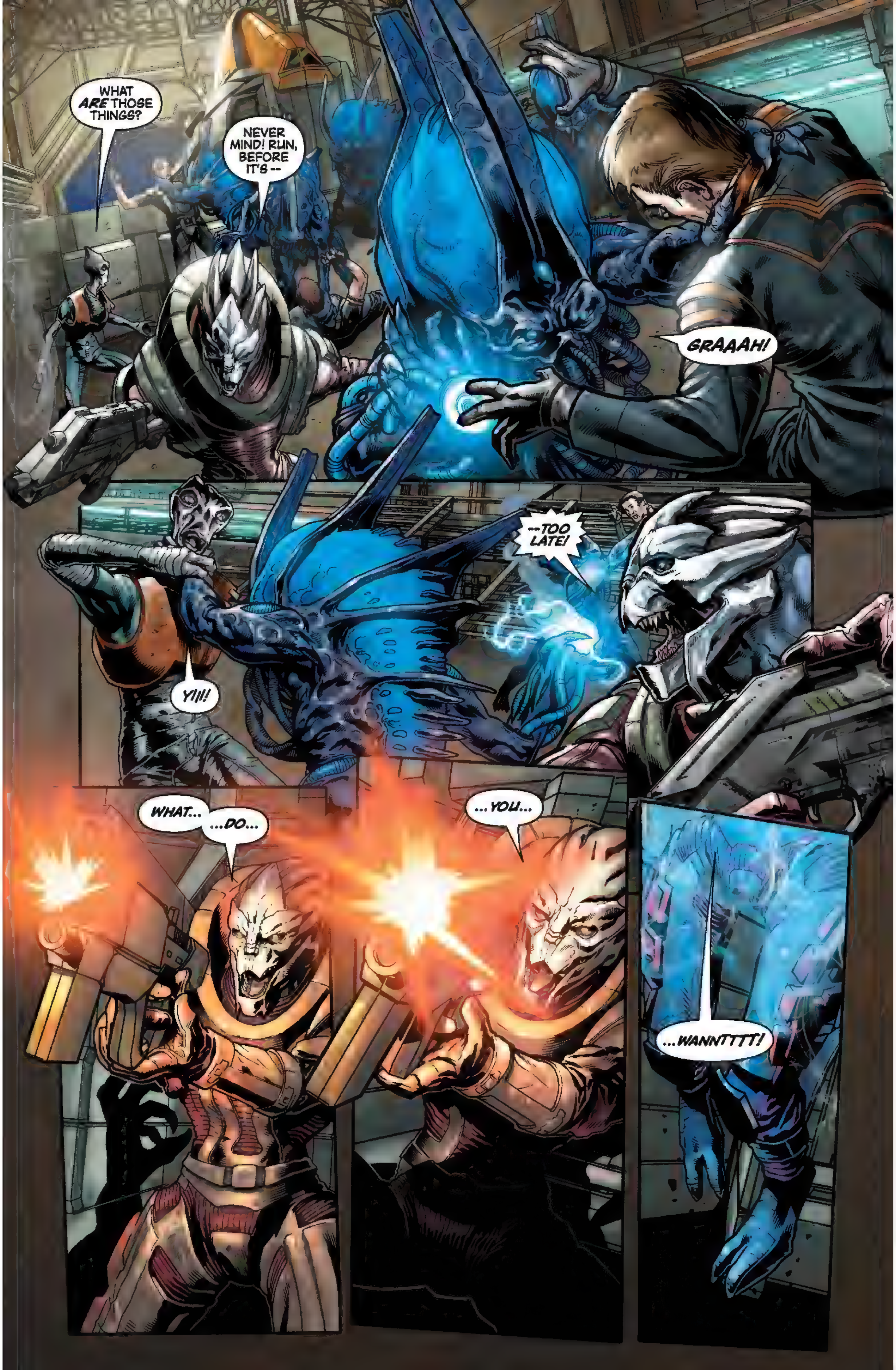
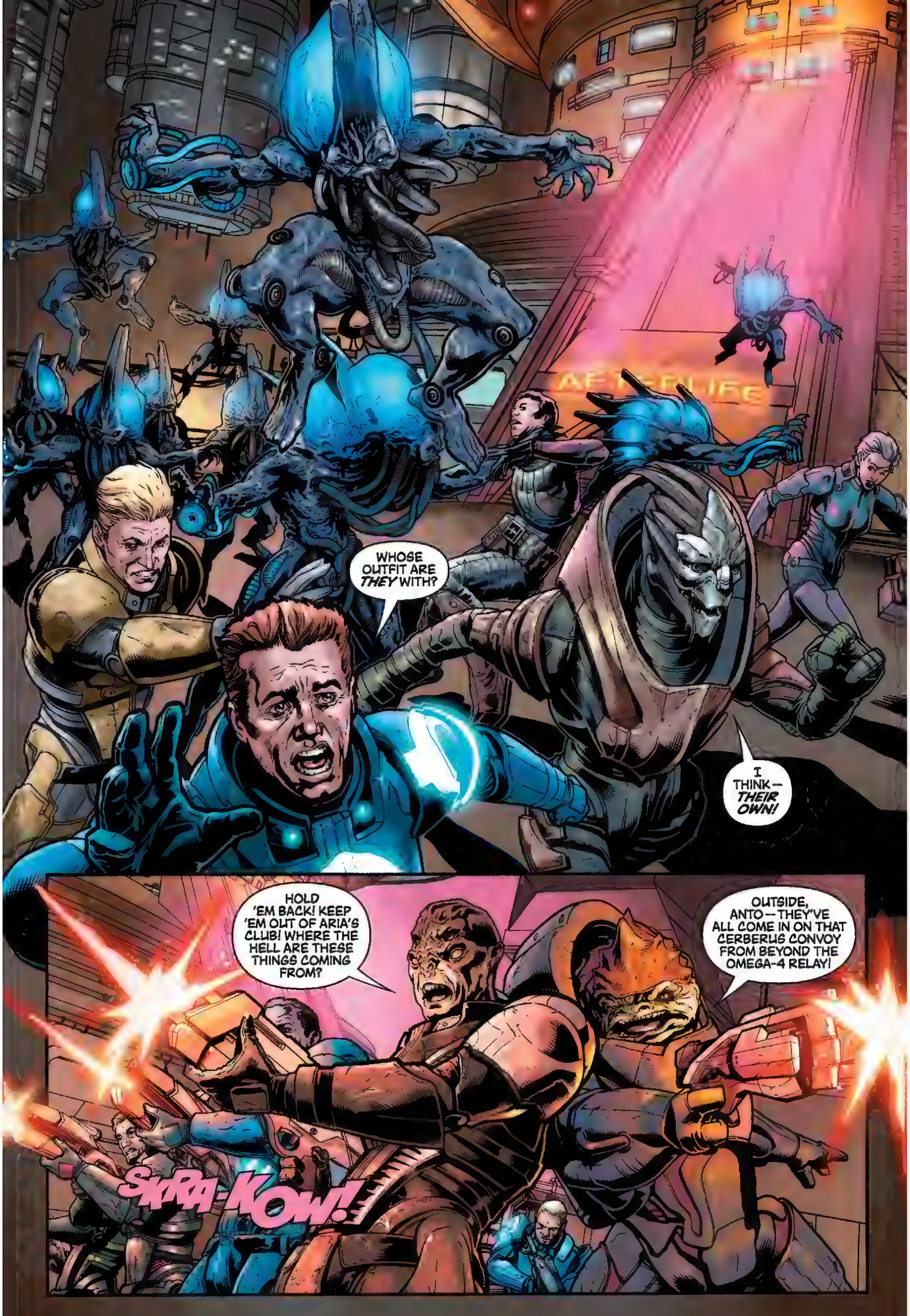
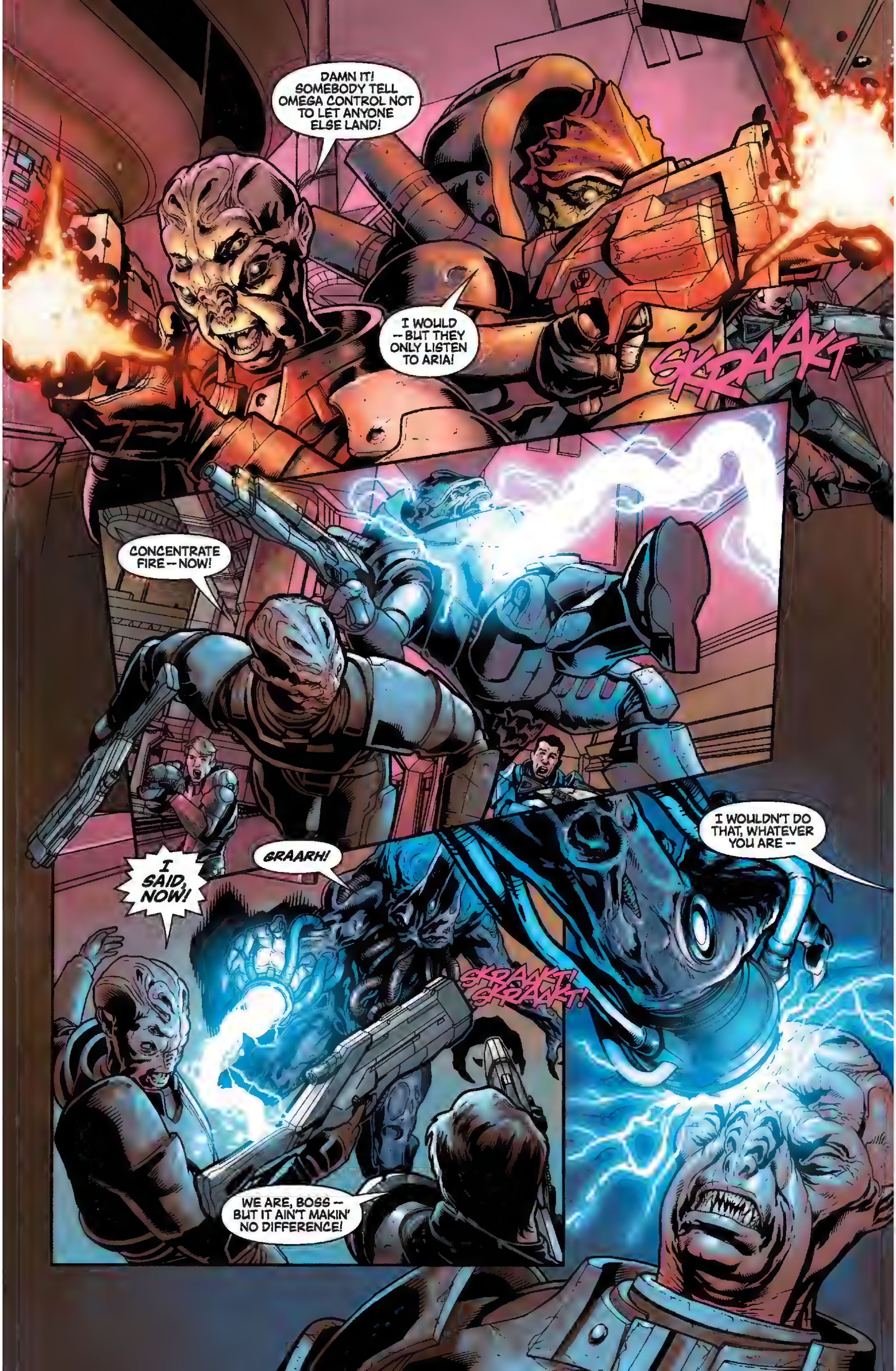
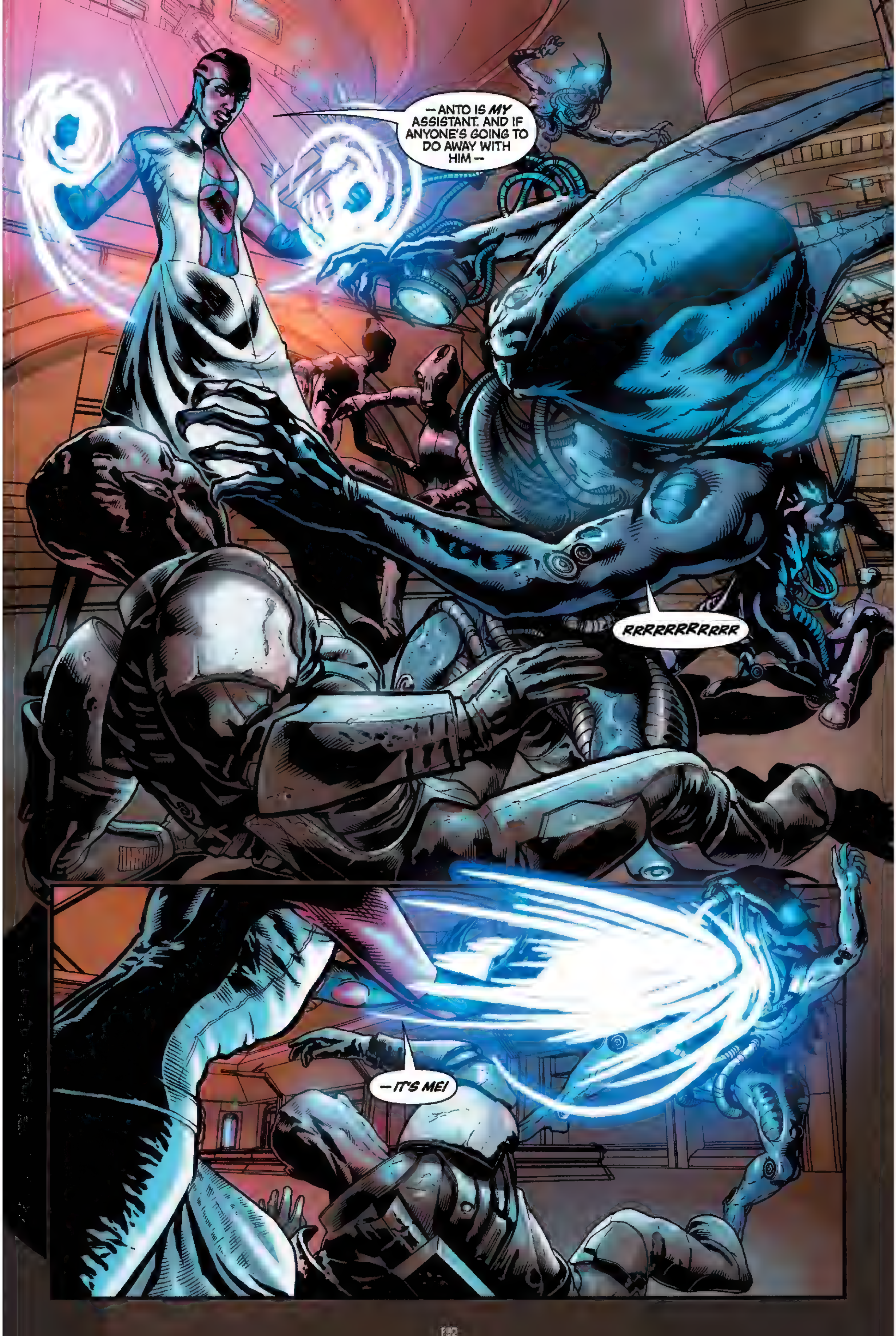

WHILE THE GRAYSON AFFAIR SOURED RELATIONS BETWEEN THE PROHUMAN MOVEMENT CERBERUS AND OMEGA'S SELF-PROCLAIMED LEADER--
--ARIA T'LOAK WAS NEVER ONE TO LET A PERSONAL GRUDGE STAND IN THE WAY OF PROFIT.
WITH CERBERUS ESTABLISHING RESEARCH BASES BEYOND THE OMEGA-4 MASS RELAY, ARIA SAW A CHANCE FOR OMEGA TO BECOME A SUPPLY HUB.
AND OTHERS SAW OPPORTUNITY AS WELL...
QUIET! WAIT UNTIL IT'S LANDED!
HITTIN' A CERBERUS SHIP? *THE QUEEN* WON'T LIKE IT.
ARIA? WHO GIVES A DAMN? IF SHE THINKS SHE'S IN CHARGE OF OMEGA, LET HER COME DOWN HERE AND CLAIM HER CUT HERSELF.
I SAY I SAW IT FIRST. AND I SAY WHAT'S IN THAT SHIP IS ALL--

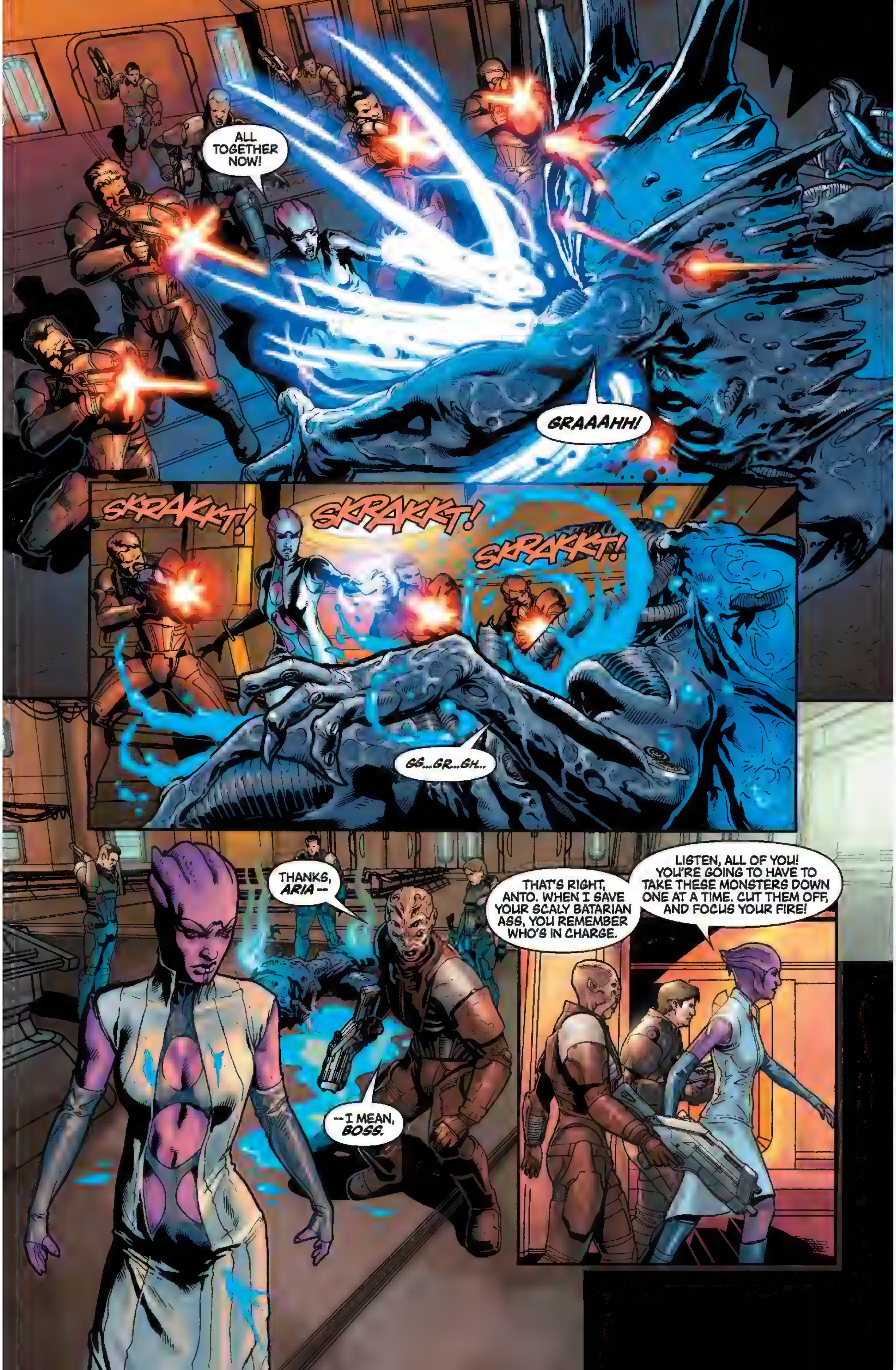

RRRRRRRRRRRRRR
—MINE?

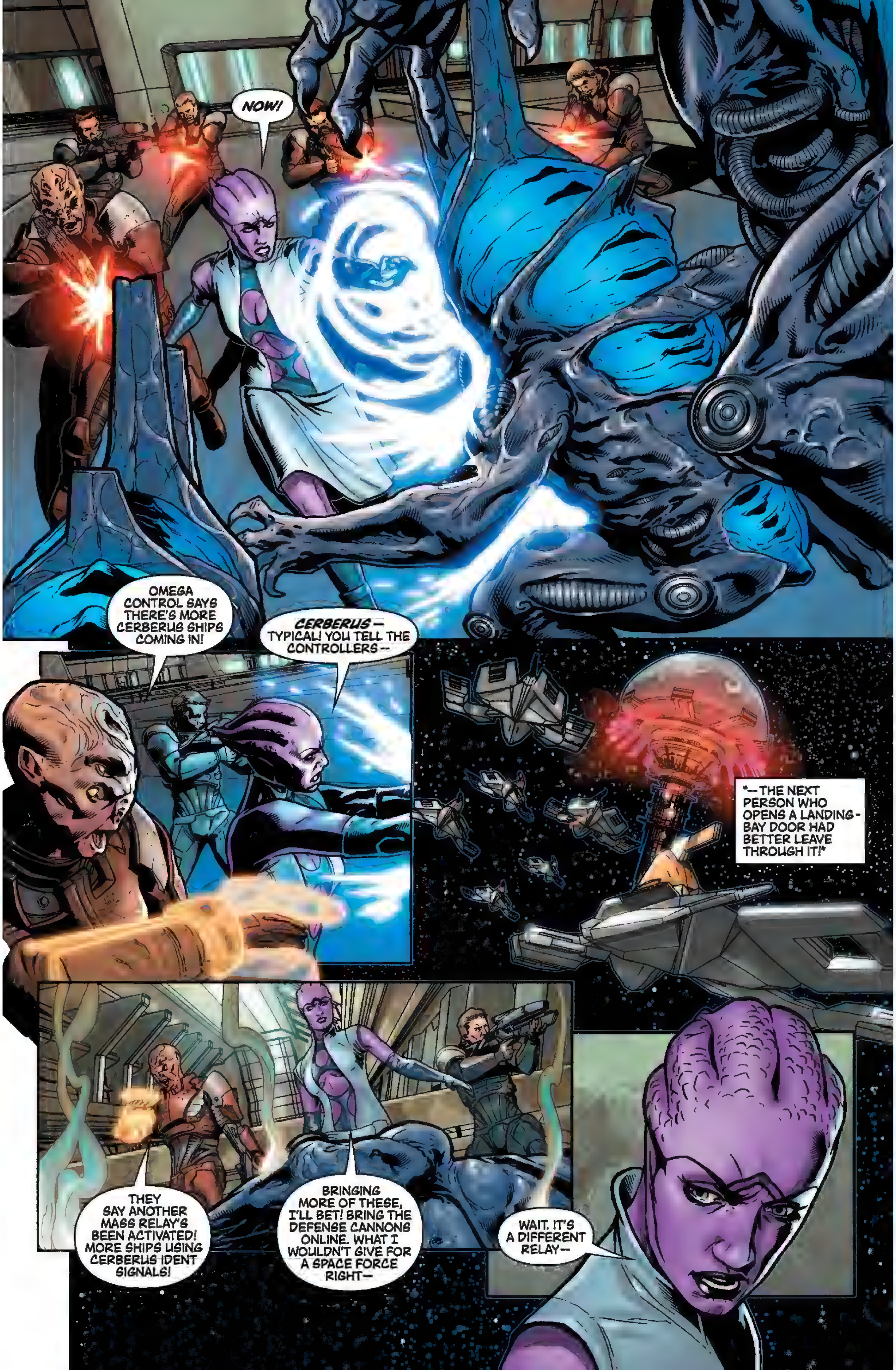

WHAT *ARE* THOSE THINGS?
NEVER MIND! RUN, BEFORE IT'S --
GRAAAH!
--TOO LATE!
YIII!
WHAT...
...DO...
...YOU...
...WANNTTTT!

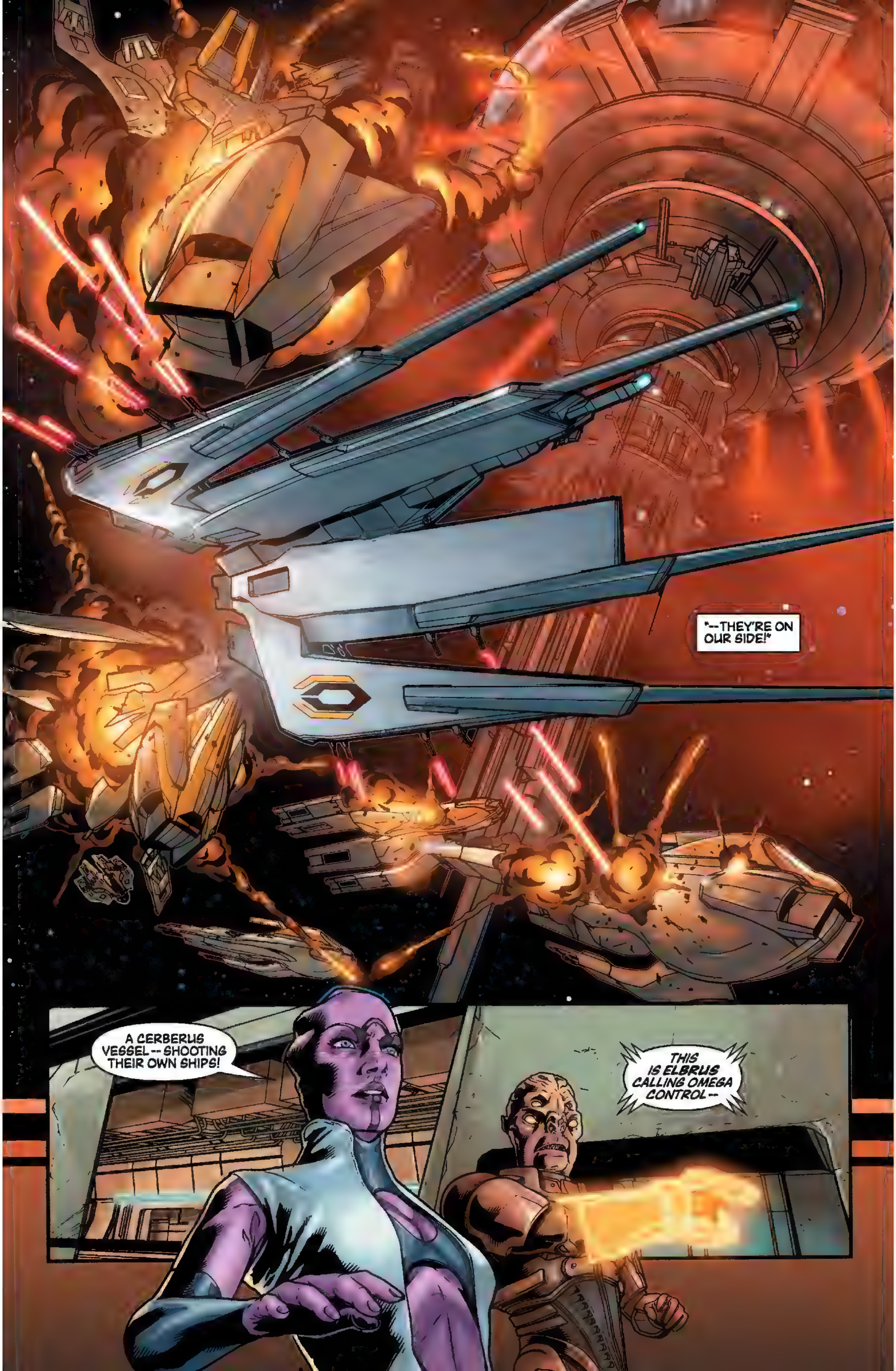

AFTERLIFE
WHOSE OUTFIT ARE *THEY* WITH?
I THINK-- *THEIR OWN!*
HOLD 'EM BACK! KEEP 'EM OUT OF ARIA'S CLUB! WHERE THE HELL ARE THESE THINGS COMING FROM?
OUTSIDE, ANTO -- THEY'VE ALL COME IN ON THAT CERBERUS CONVOY FROM BEYOND THE OMEGA-4 RELAY!
SKRA-KOW!

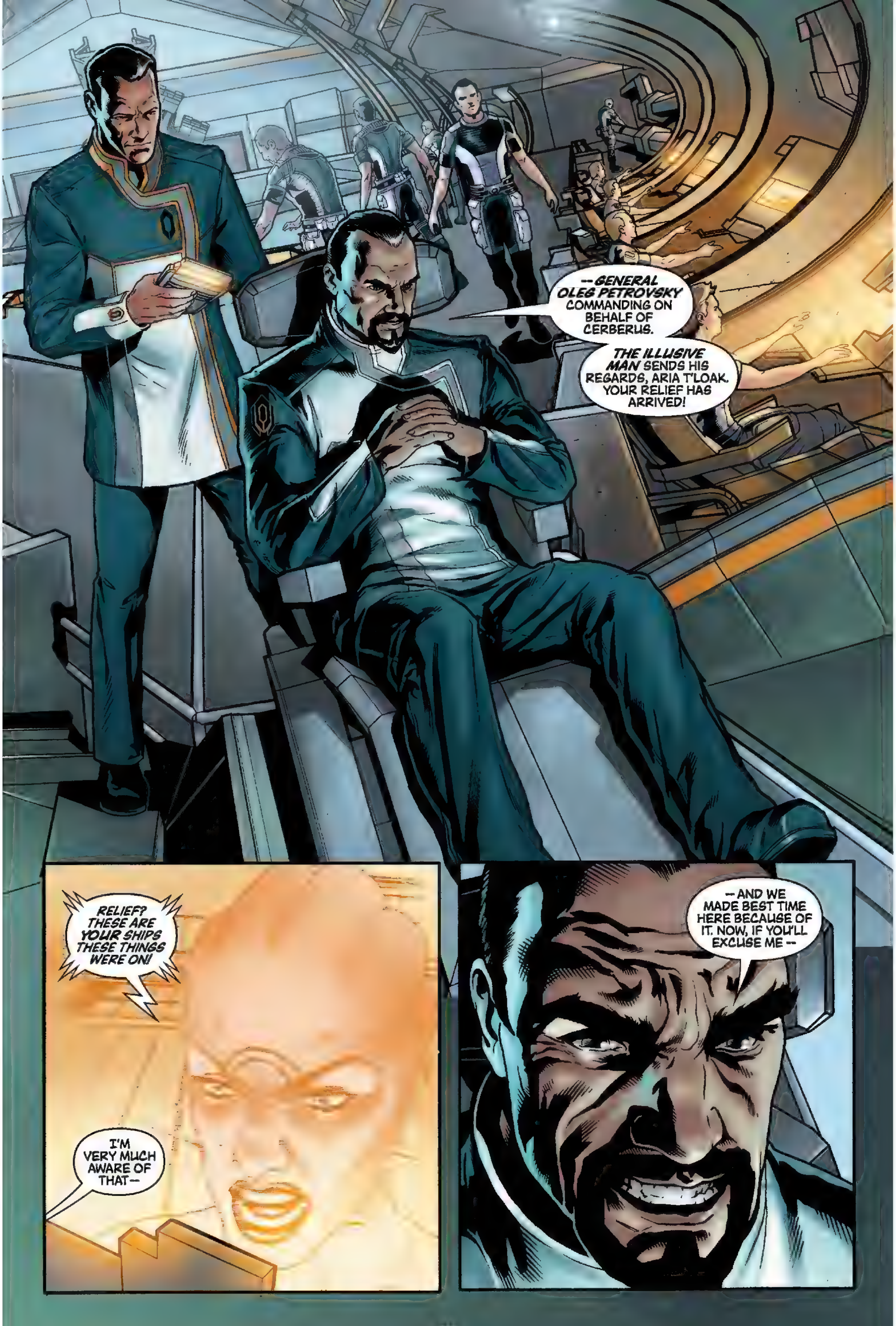

DAMN IT! SOMEBODY TELL OMEGA CONTROL NOT TO LET ANYONE ELSE LAND!
I WOULD --BUT THEY ONLY LISTEN TO ARIA!
SKRAAKT
CONCENTRATE FIRE--NOW!
I SAID, NOW!
GRAARH!
I WOULDN'T DO THAT, WHATEVER YOU ARE --
SKRAAKT! SKRAAKT!
WE ARE, BOSS -- BUT IT AIN'T MAKIN' NO DIFFERENCE!

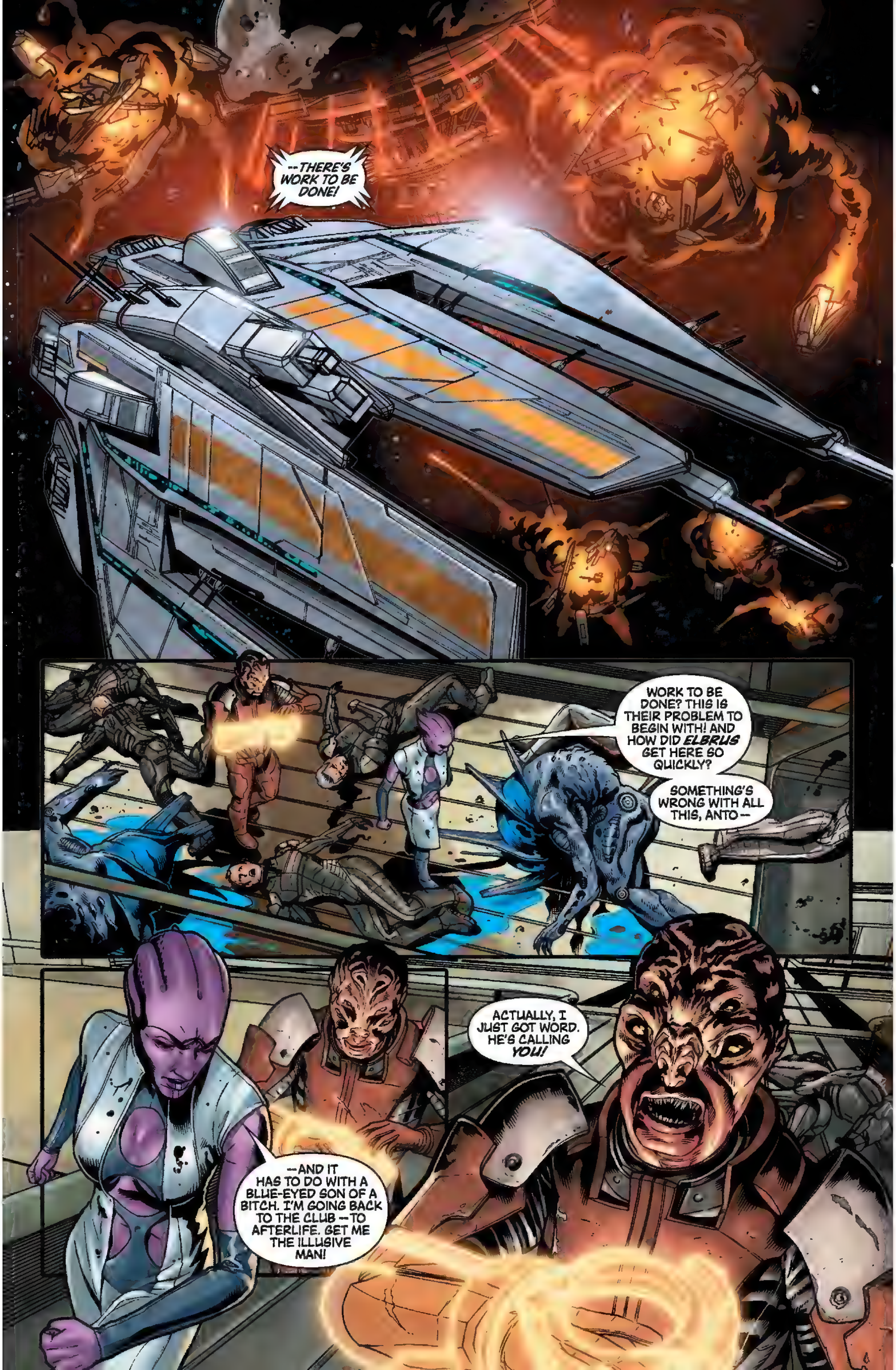

—ANTO IS *MY* ASSISTANT. AND IF ANYONE'S GOING TO DO AWAY WITH HIM—
RRRRRRRRRRRR
—IT'S ME!

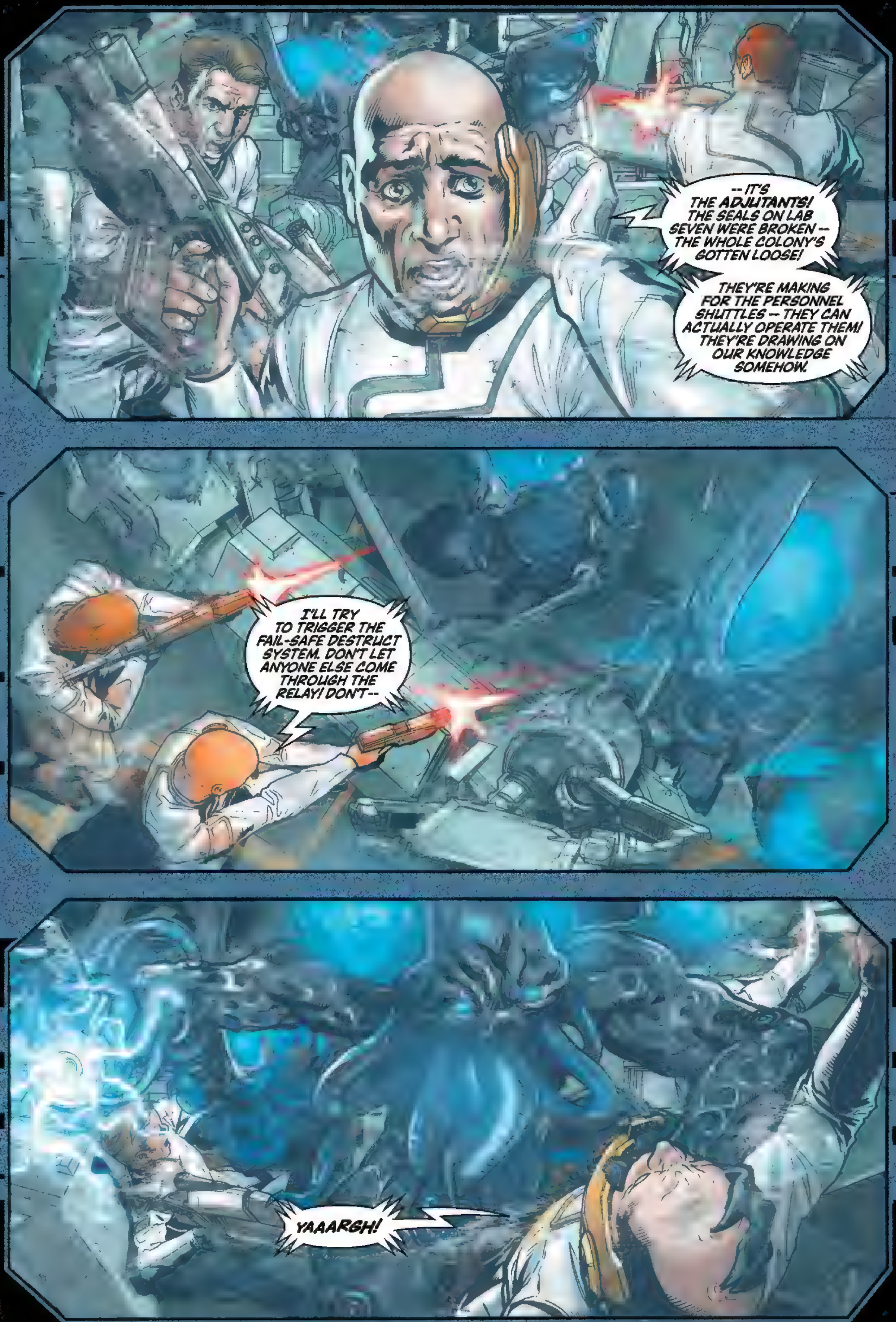

ALL TOGETHER NOW!
GRAAAHH!
SKRAKKT!
SKRAKKT!
SKRAKKT!
GG...GR...GH...
THANKS, *ARIA*—
—I MEAN, *BOSS.*
THAT'S RIGHT, ANTO. WHEN I SAVE YOUR SCALY BATARIAN ASS, YOU REMEMBER WHO'S IN CHARGE.
LISTEN, ALL OF YOU! YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE THESE MONSTERS DOWN ONE AT A TIME. CUT THEM OFF, AND FOCUS YOUR FIRE!

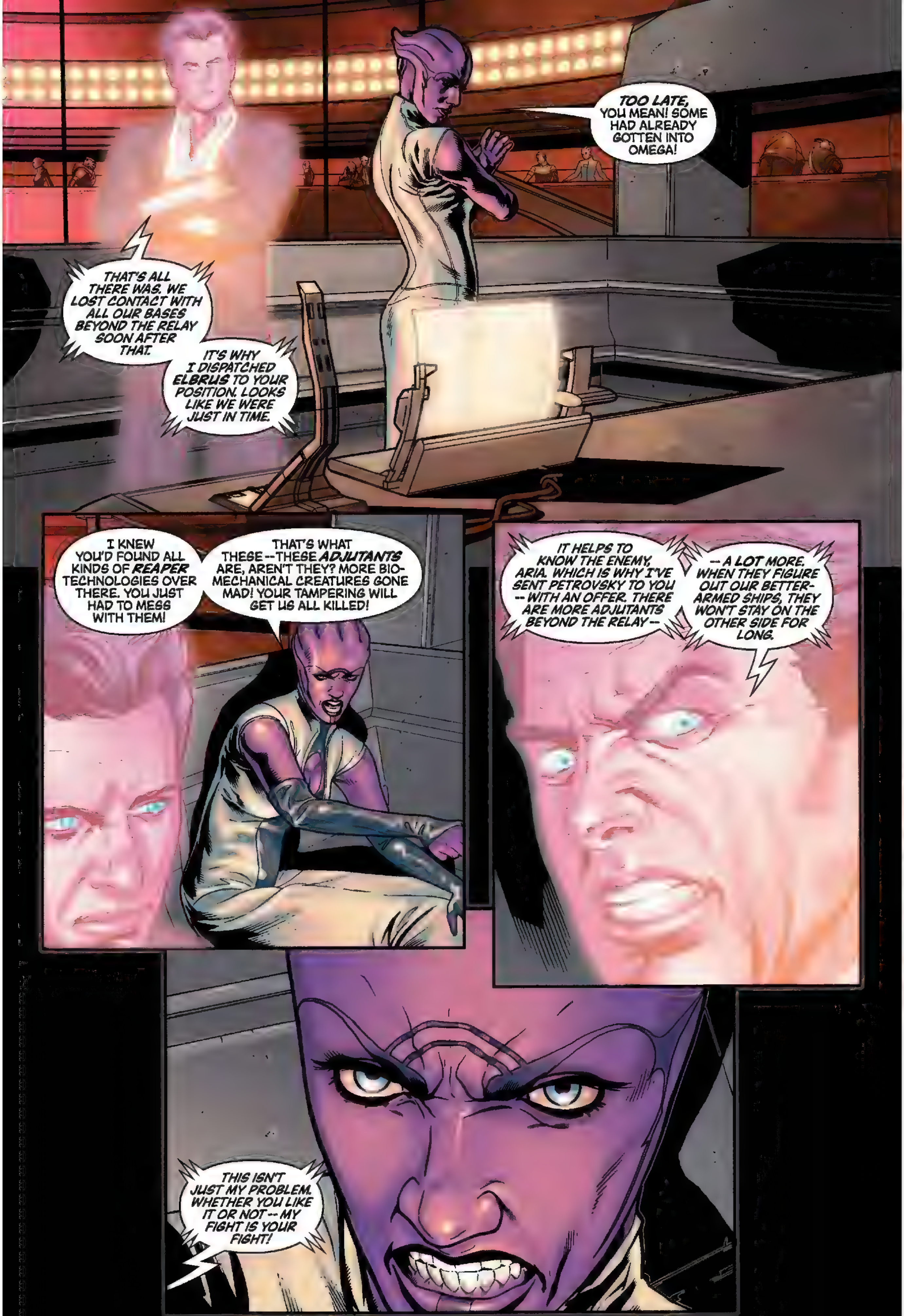

NOW!
OMEGA CONTROL SAYS THERE'S MORE CERBERUS SHIPS COMING IN!
CERBERUS — TYPICAL! YOU TELL THE CONTROLLERS --
"-- THE NEXT PERSON WHO OPENS A LANDING-BAY DOOR HAD BETTER LEAVE THROUGH IT!"
THEY SAY ANOTHER MASS RELAY'S BEEN ACTIVATED! MORE SHIPS USING CERBERUS IDENT SIGNALS!
BRINGING MORE OF THESE, I'LL BET! BRING THE DEFENSE CANNONS ONLINE. WHAT I WOULDN'T GIVE FOR A SPACE FORCE RIGHT—
WAIT. IT'S A DIFFERENT RELAY—

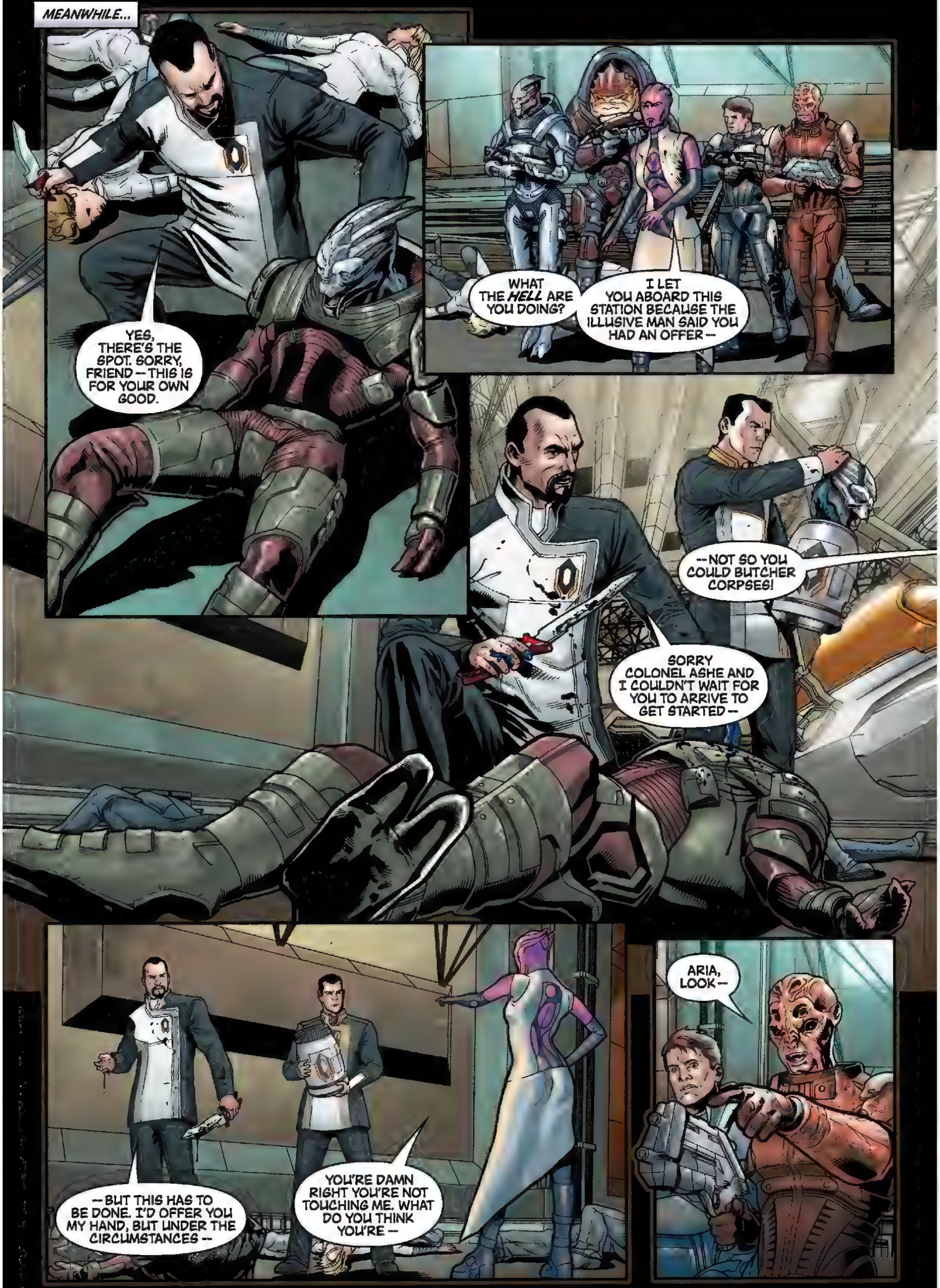

"--THEY'RE ON OUR SIDE!"
A CERBERUS VESSEL -- SHOOTING THEIR OWN SHIPS!
THIS IS ELBRUS CALLING OMEGA CONTROL --

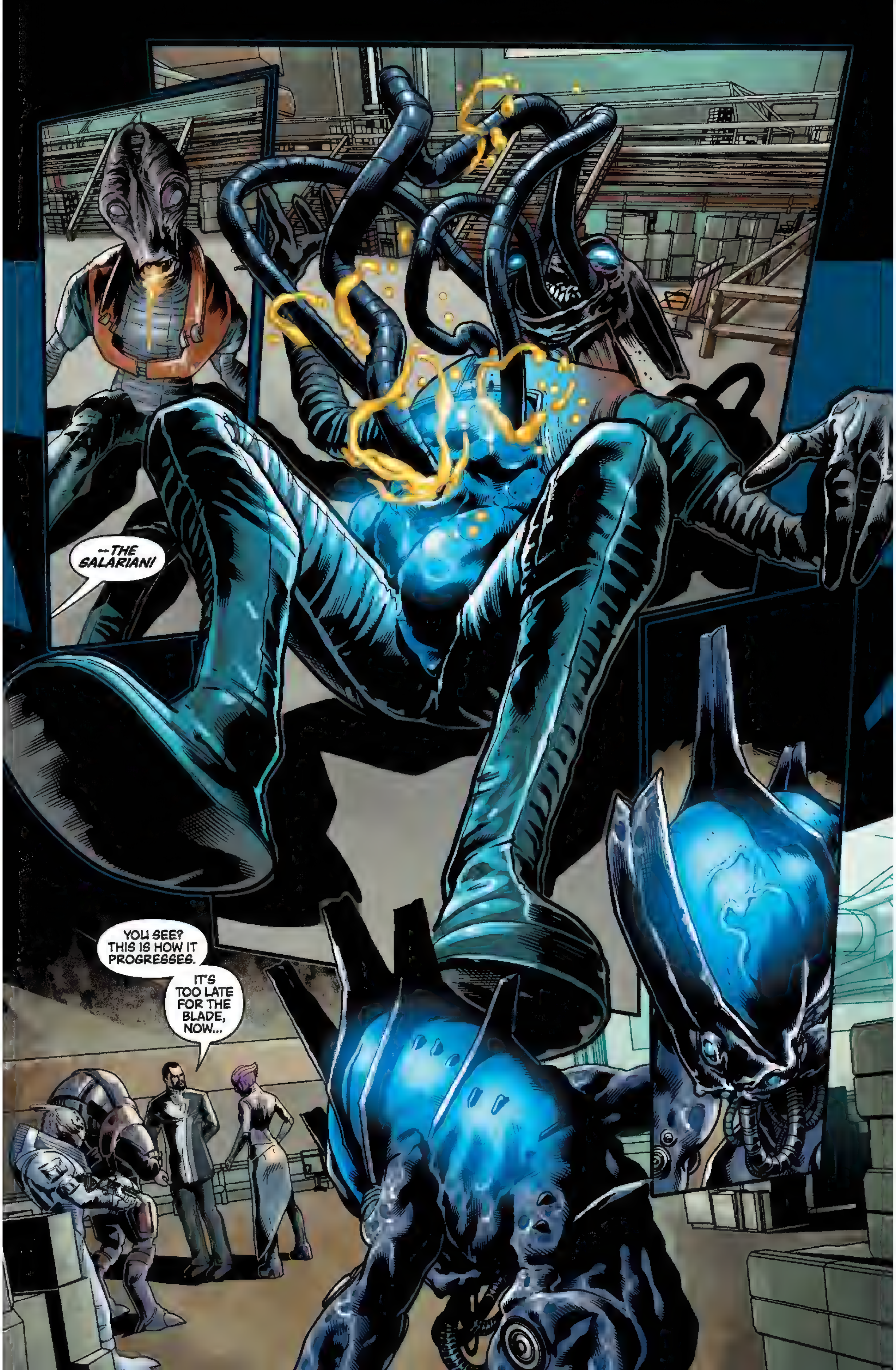

--*GENERAL OLEG PETROVSKY* COMMANDING ON BEHALF OF CERBERUS.
THE ILLUSIVE MAN SENDS HIS REGARDS, ARIA T'LOAK. YOUR RELIEF HAS ARRIVED!
RELIEF? THESE ARE ***YOUR*** *SHIPS THESE THINGS WERE ON!*
I'M VERY MUCH AWARE OF THAT--
--AND WE MADE BEST TIME HERE BECAUSE OF IT. NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME --

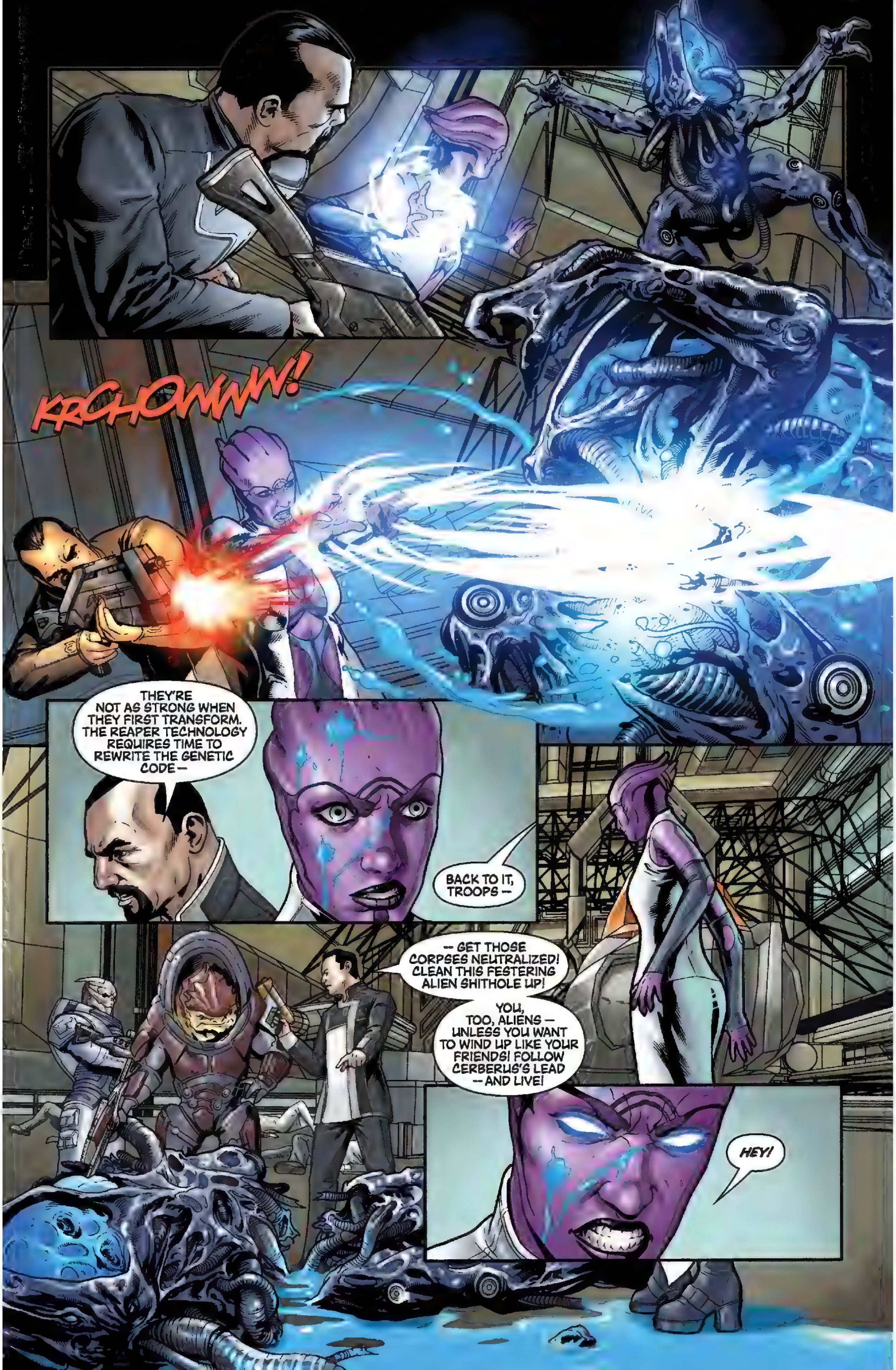

--THERE'S WORK TO BE DONE!
WORK TO BE DONE? THIS IS THEIR PROBLEM TO BEGIN WITH! AND HOW DID *ELBRUS* GET HERE SO QUICKLY?
SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH ALL THIS, ANTO--
ACTUALLY, I JUST GOT WORD. HE'S CALLING *YOU!*
--AND IT HAS TO DO WITH A BLUE-EYED SON OF A BITCH. I'M GOING BACK TO THE CLUB --TO AFTERLIFE. GET ME THE ILLUSIVE MAN!

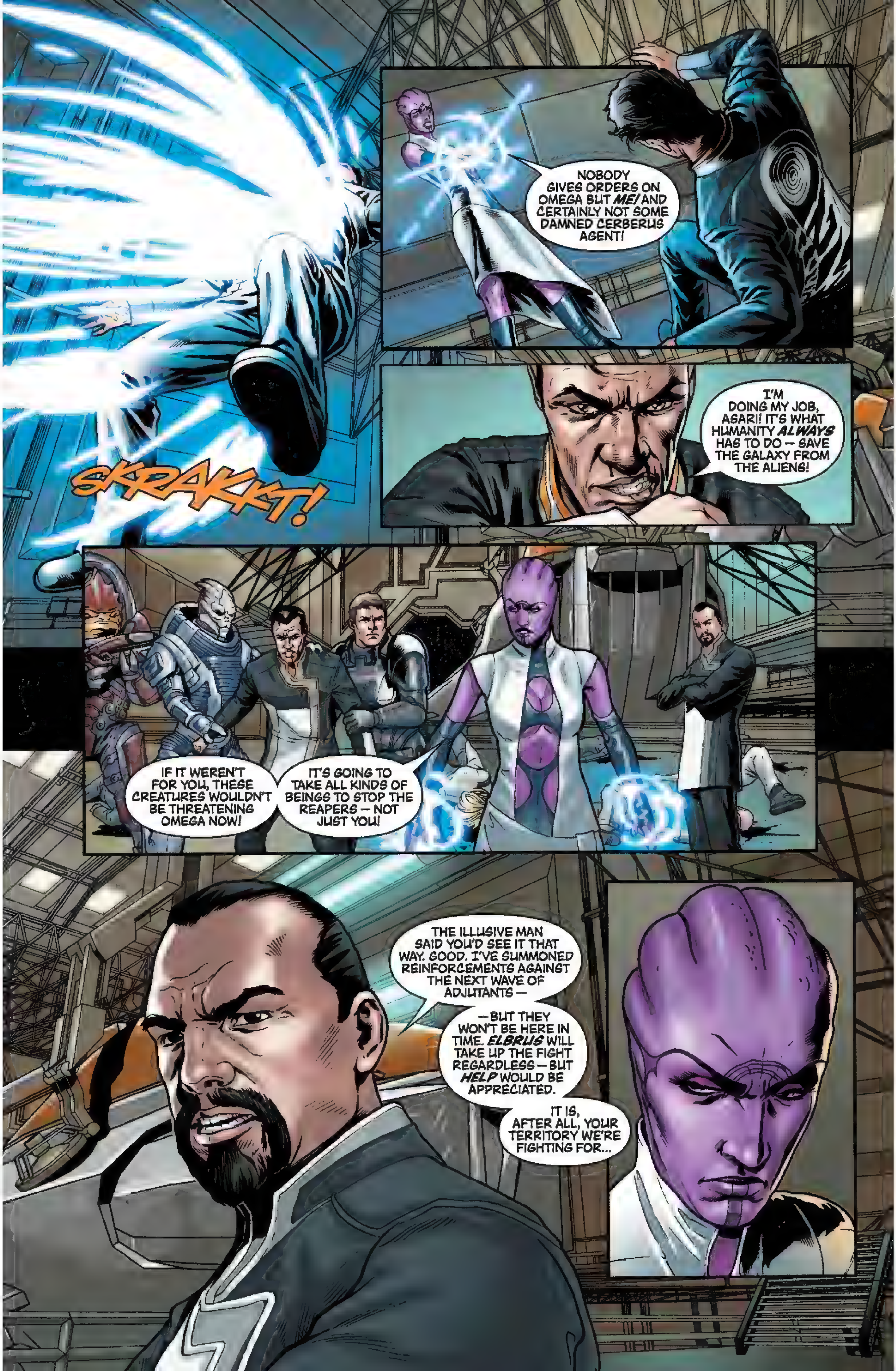

-- IT'S THE **ADJUTANTS!** THE SEALS ON LAB SEVEN WERE BROKEN -- THE WHOLE COLONY'S GOTTEN LOOSE!
THEY'RE MAKING FOR THE PERSONNEL SHUTTLES -- THEY CAN ACTUALLY OPERATE THEM! THEY'RE DRAWING ON OUR KNOWLEDGE SOMEHOW.
I'LL TRY TO TRIGGER THE FAIL-SAFE DESTRUCT SYSTEM. DON'T LET ANYONE ELSE COME THROUGH THE RELAY! DON'T--
YAAARGH!

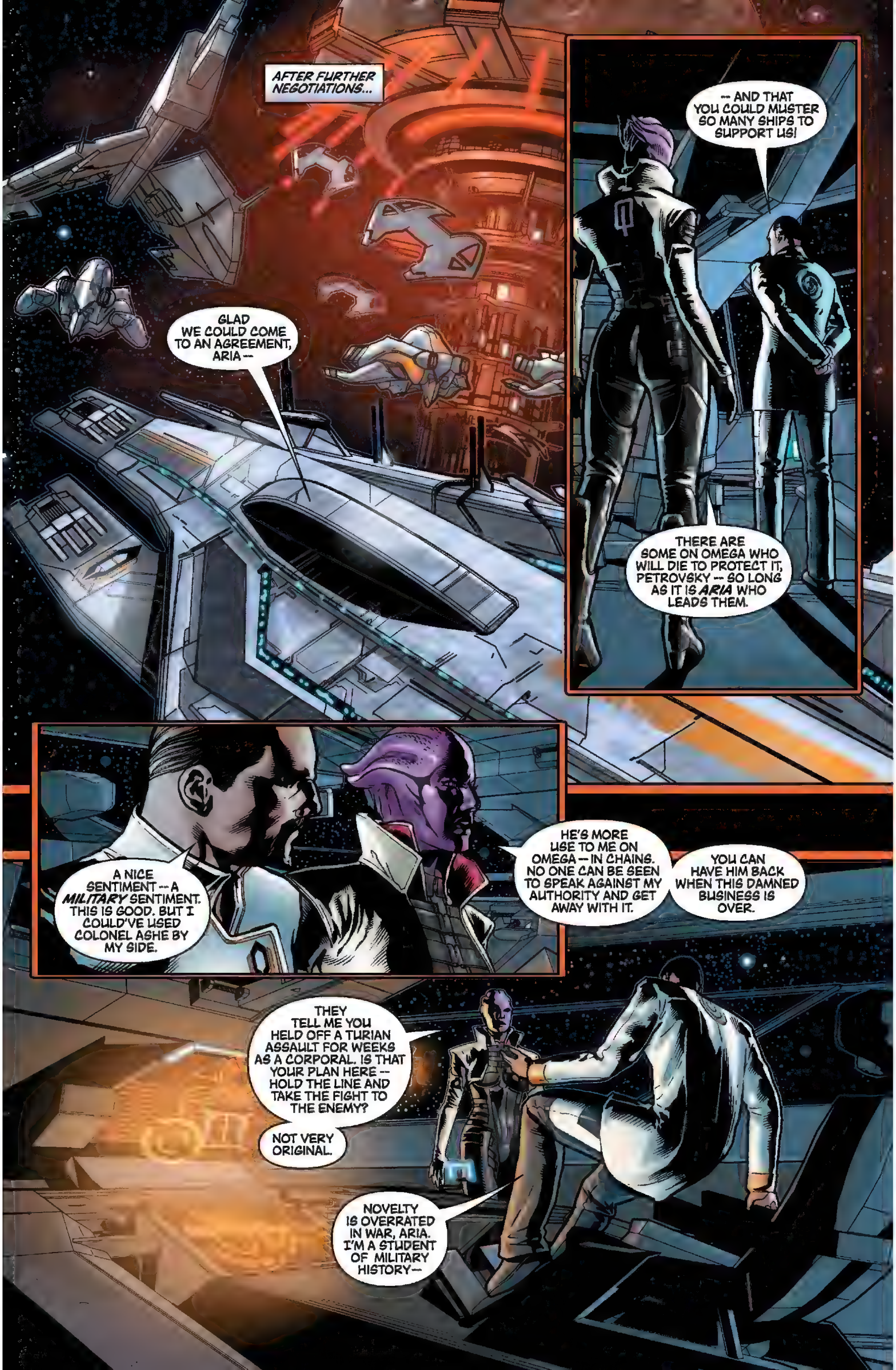

TOO LATE, YOU MEAN! SOME HAD ALREADY GOTTEN INTO OMEGA!
THAT'S ALL THERE WAS. WE LOST CONTACT WITH ALL OUR BASES BEYOND THE RELAY SOON AFTER THAT.
IT'S WHY I DISPATCHED ELBRUS TO YOUR POSITION. LOOKS LIKE WE WERE JUST IN TIME.
I KNEW YOU'D FOUND ALL KINDS OF REAPER TECHNOLOGIES OVER THERE. YOU JUST HAD TO MESS WITH THEM!
THAT'S WHAT THESE -- THESE ADJUTANTS ARE, AREN'T THEY? MORE BIO-MECHANICAL CREATURES GONE MAD! YOUR TAMPERING WILL GET US ALL KILLED!
IT HELPS TO KNOW THE ENEMY, ARIA. WHICH IS WHY I'VE SENT PETROVSKY TO YOU -- WITH AN OFFER. THERE ARE MORE ADJUTANTS BEYOND THE RELAY --
-- A LOT MORE. WHEN THEY FIGURE OUT OUR BETTER-ARMED SHIPS, THEY WON'T STAY ON THE OTHER SIDE FOR LONG.
THIS ISN'T JUST MY PROBLEM. WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT -- MY FIGHT IS YOUR FIGHT!

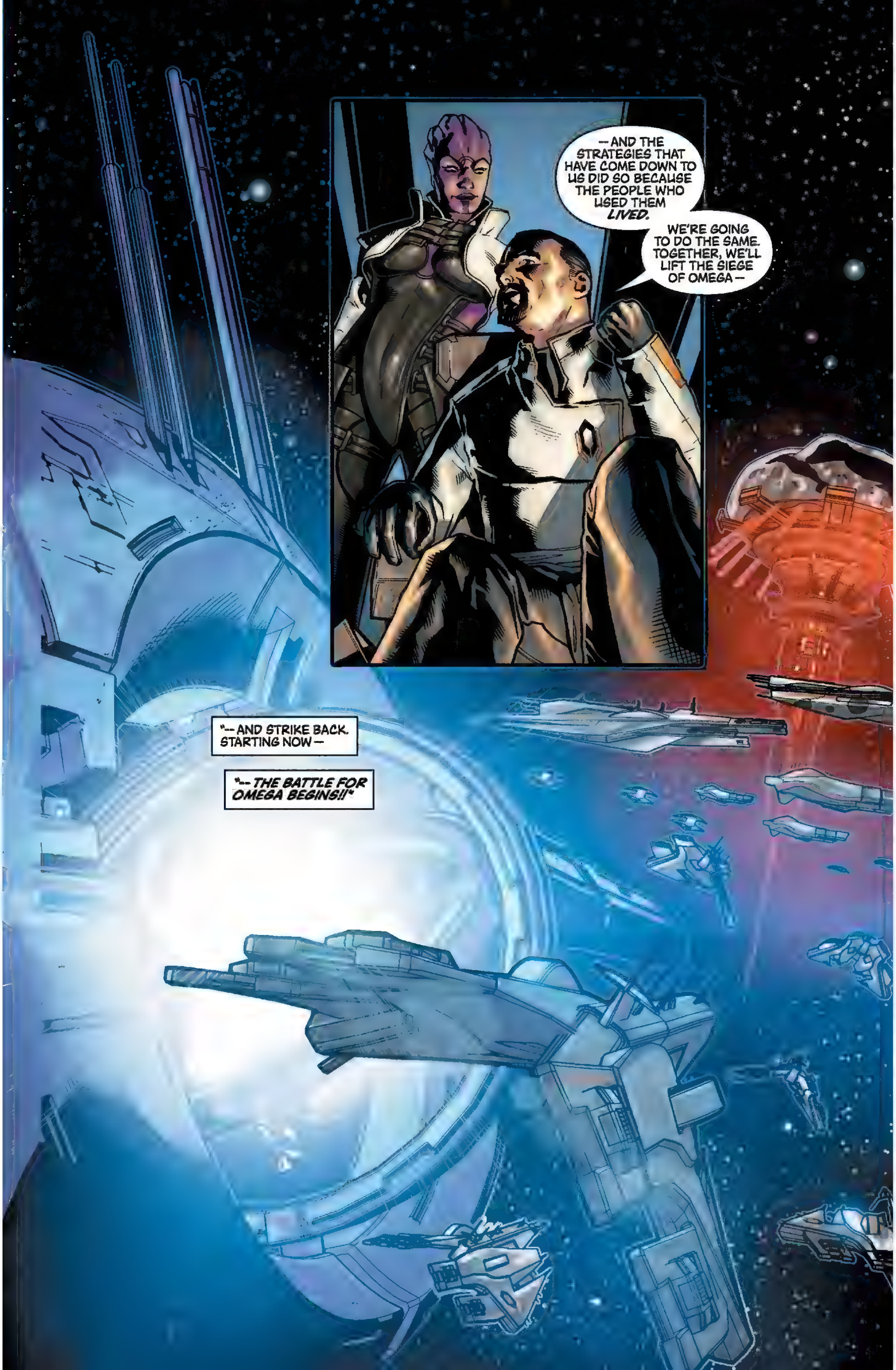

MEANWHILE...
YES, THERE'S THE SPOT. SORRY, FRIEND -- THIS IS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD.
WHAT THE *HELL* ARE YOU DOING?
I LET YOU ABOARD THIS STATION BECAUSE THE ILLUSIVE MAN SAID YOU HAD AN OFFER --
--NOT SO YOU COULD BUTCHER CORPSES!
SORRY COLONEL ASHE AND I COULDN'T WAIT FOR YOU TO ARRIVE TO GET STARTED --
-- BUT THIS HAS TO BE DONE. I'D OFFER YOU MY HAND, BUT UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES --
YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT YOU'RE NOT TOUCHING ME. WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE --
ARIA, LOOK --

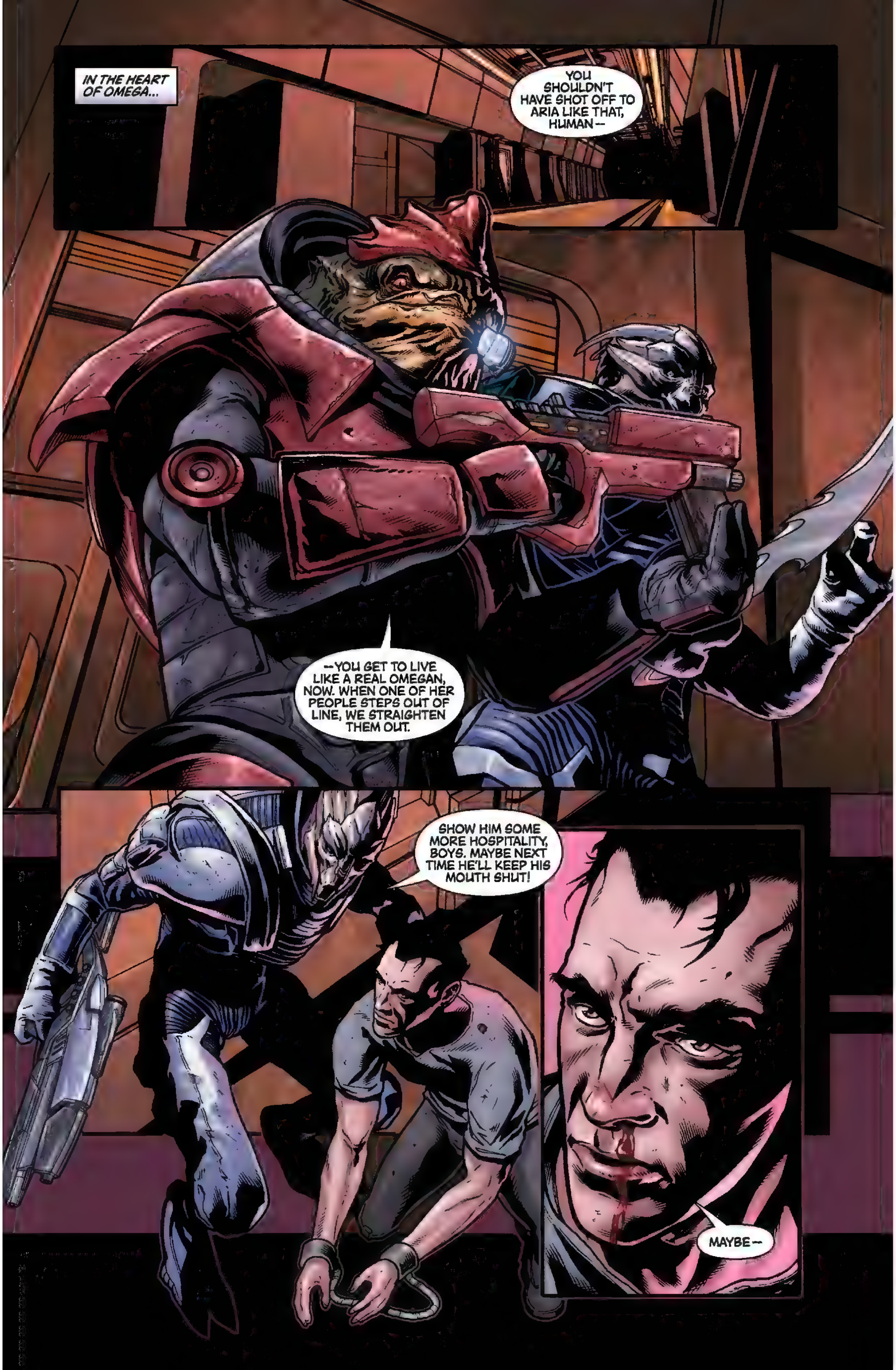

--THE SALARIAN!
YOU SEE? THIS IS HOW IT PROGRESSES.
IT'S TOO LATE FOR THE BLADE, NOW...

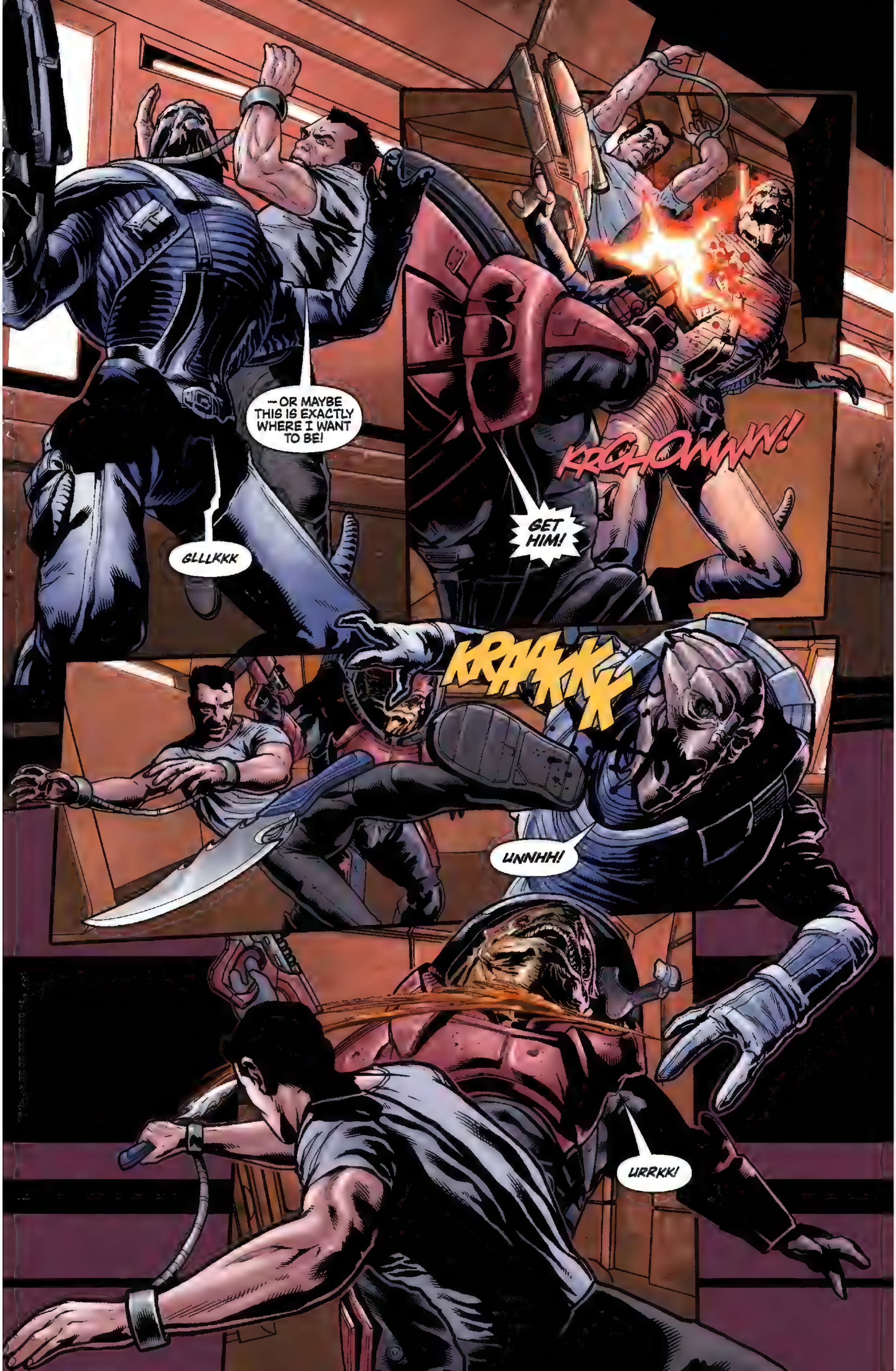

KRCHOWWW!
THEY'RE NOT AS STRONG WHEN THEY FIRST TRANSFORM. THE REAPER TECHNOLOGY REQUIRES TIME TO REWRITE THE GENETIC CODE —
BACK TO IT, TROOPS —
— GET THOSE CORPSES NEUTRALIZED! CLEAN THIS FESTERING ALIEN SHITHOLE UP!
YOU, TOO, ALIENS — UNLESS YOU WANT TO WIND UP LIKE YOUR FRIENDS! FOLLOW CERBERUS'S LEAD — AND LIVE!
HEY!

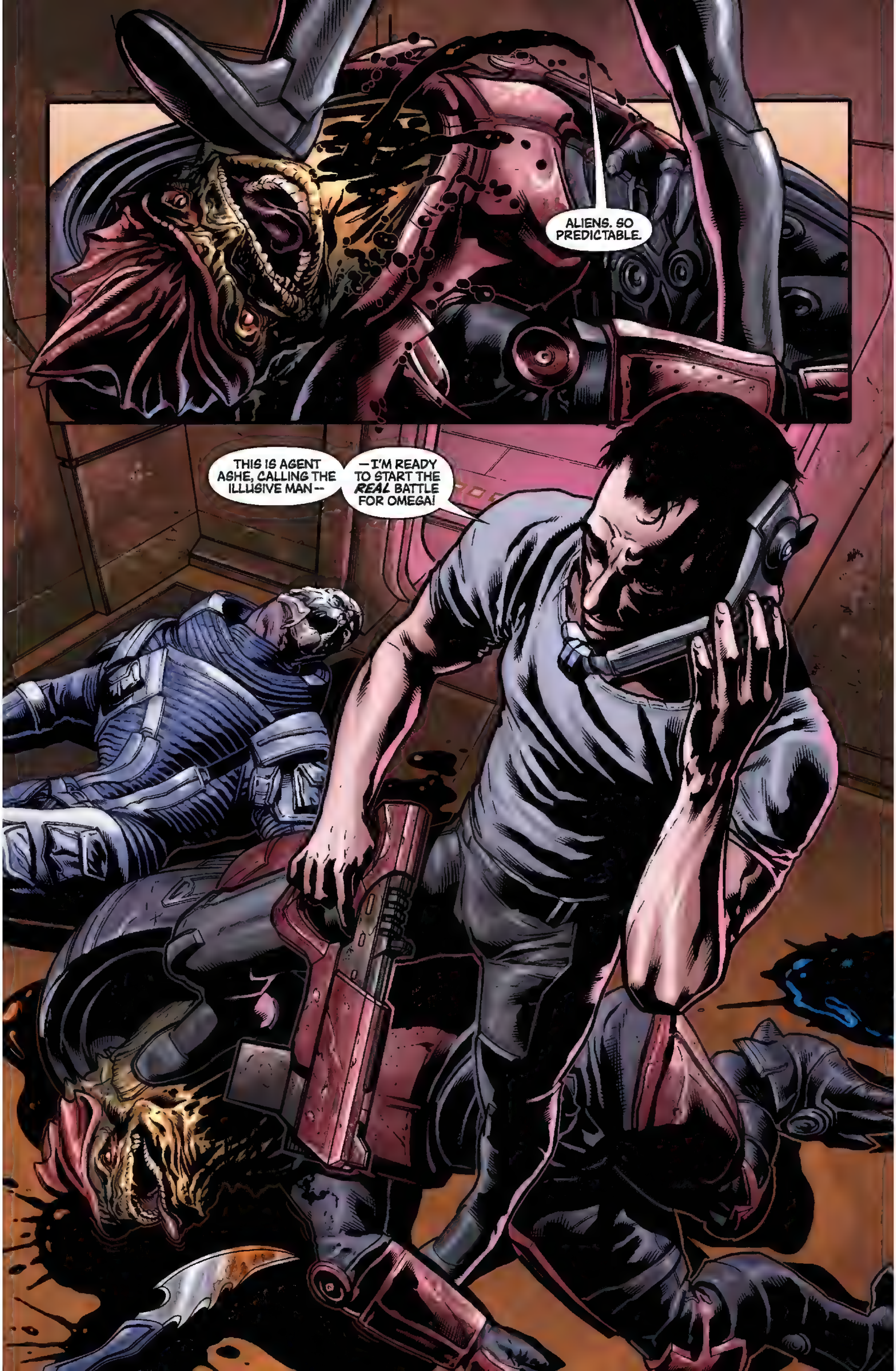

NOBODY GIVES ORDERS ON OMEGA BUT *ME!* AND CERTAINLY NOT SOME DAMNED CERBERUS AGENT!
SKRAKKT!
I'M DOING MY JOB, ASARI! IT'S WHAT HUMANITY *ALWAYS* HAS TO DO -- SAVE THE GALAXY FROM THE ALIENS!
IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU, THESE CREATURES WOULDN'T BE THREATENING OMEGA NOW!
IT'S GOING TO TAKE ALL KINDS OF BEINGS TO STOP THE REAPERS -- NOT JUST YOU!
THE ILLUSIVE MAN SAID YOU'D SEE IT THAT WAY. GOOD. I'VE SUMMONED REINFORCEMENTS AGAINST THE NEXT WAVE OF ADJUTANTS --
-- BUT THEY WON'T BE HERE IN TIME. *ELBRUS* WILL TAKE UP THE FIGHT REGARDLESS -- BUT *HELP* WOULD BE APPRECIATED.
IT IS, AFTER ALL, YOUR TERRITORY WE'RE FIGHTING FOR...

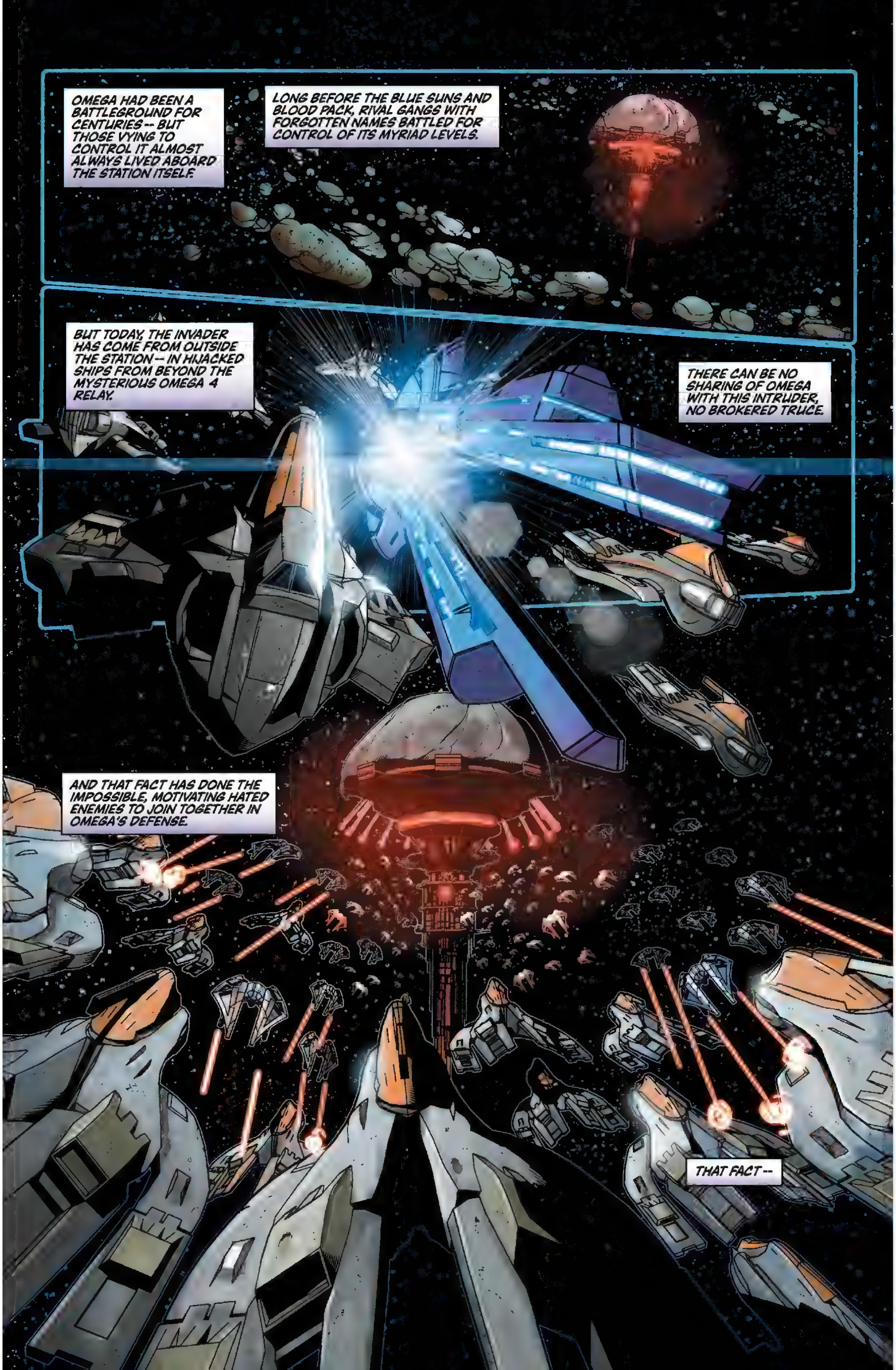

AFTER FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS...
GLAD WE COULD COME TO AN AGREEMENT, ARIA --
-- AND THAT YOU COULD MUSTER SO MANY SHIPS TO SUPPORT US!
THERE ARE SOME ON OMEGA WHO WILL DIE TO PROTECT IT, PETROVSKY -- SO LONG AS IT IS *ARIA* WHO LEADS THEM.
A NICE SENTIMENT -- A *MILITARY* SENTIMENT. THIS IS GOOD. BUT I COULD'VE USED COLONEL ASHE BY MY SIDE.
HE'S MORE USE TO ME ON OMEGA -- IN CHAINS. NO ONE CAN BE SEEN TO SPEAK AGAINST MY AUTHORITY AND GET AWAY WITH IT.
YOU CAN HAVE HIM BACK WHEN THIS DAMNED BUSINESS IS OVER.
THEY TELL ME YOU HELD OFF A TURIAN ASSAULT FOR WEEKS AS A CORPORAL. IS THAT YOUR PLAN HERE -- HOLD THE LINE AND TAKE THE FIGHT TO THE ENEMY?
NOT VERY ORIGINAL.
NOVELTY IS OVERRATED IN WAR, ARIA. I'M A STUDENT OF MILITARY HISTORY--

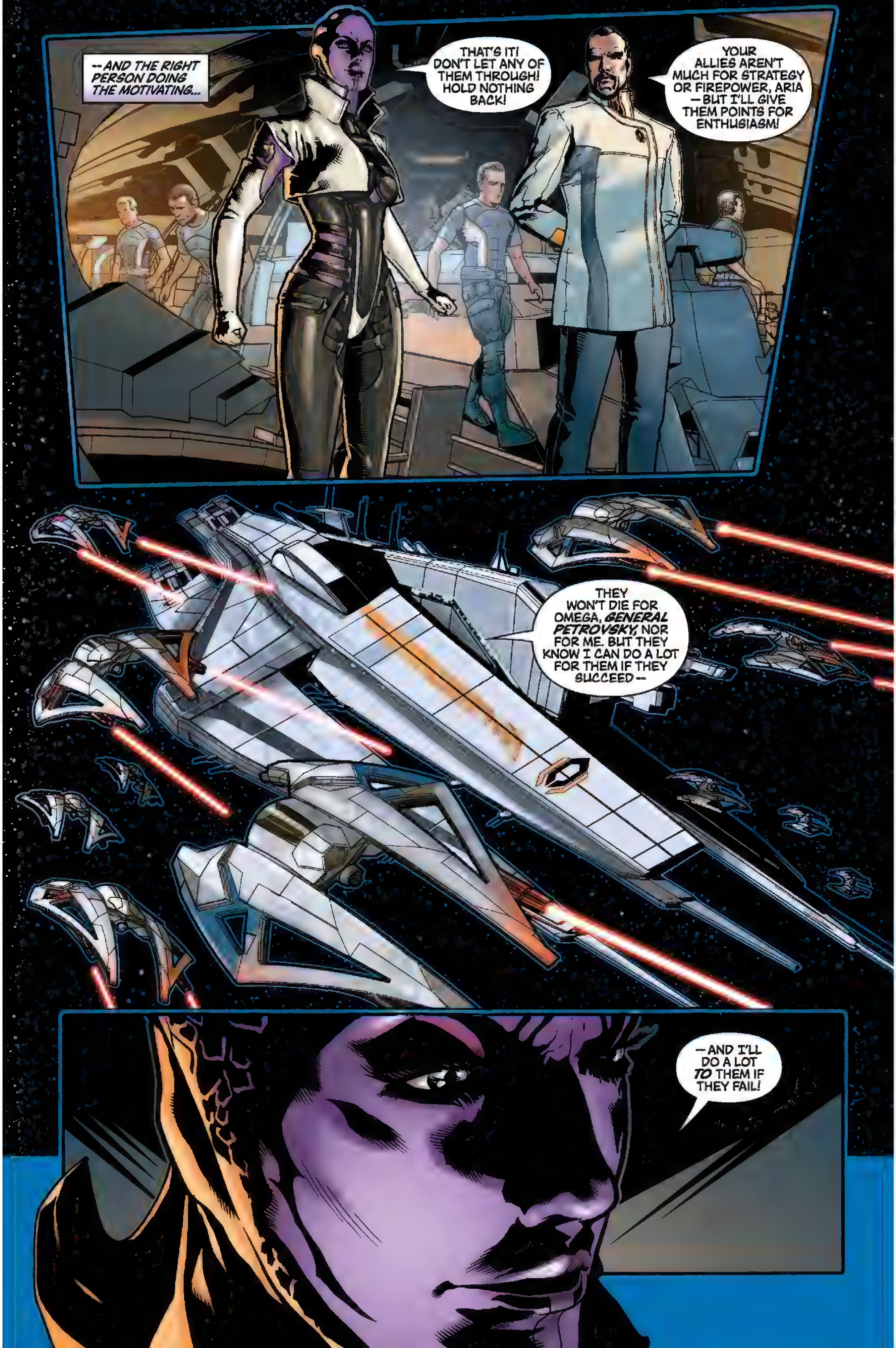

--AND THE STRATEGIES THAT HAVE COME DOWN TO US DID SO BECAUSE THE PEOPLE WHO USED THEM *LIVED.*
WE'RE GOING TO DO THE SAME. TOGETHER, WE'LL LIFT THE SIEGE OF OMEGA--
"--AND STRIKE BACK. STARTING NOW--
"--THE BATTLE FOR OMEGA BEGINS!!"

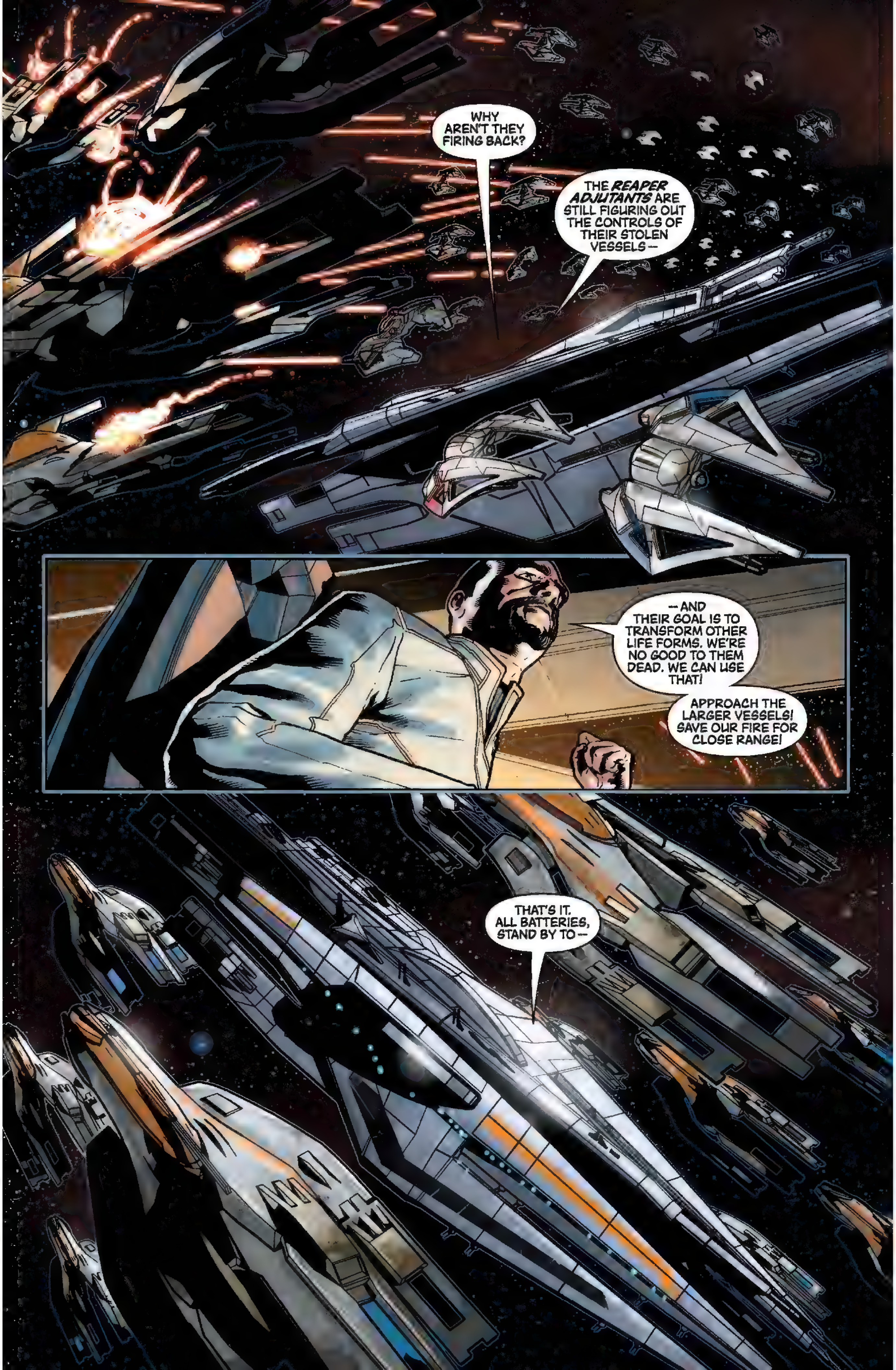

IN THE HEART OF OMEGA...
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE SHOT OFF TO ARIA LIKE THAT, HUMAN--
--YOU GET TO LIVE LIKE A REAL OMEGAN, NOW. WHEN ONE OF HER PEOPLE STEPS OUT OF LINE, WE STRAIGHTEN THEM OUT.
SHOW HIM SOME MORE HOSPITALITY, BOYS. MAYBE NEXT TIME HE'LL KEEP HIS MOUTH SHUT!
MAYBE--

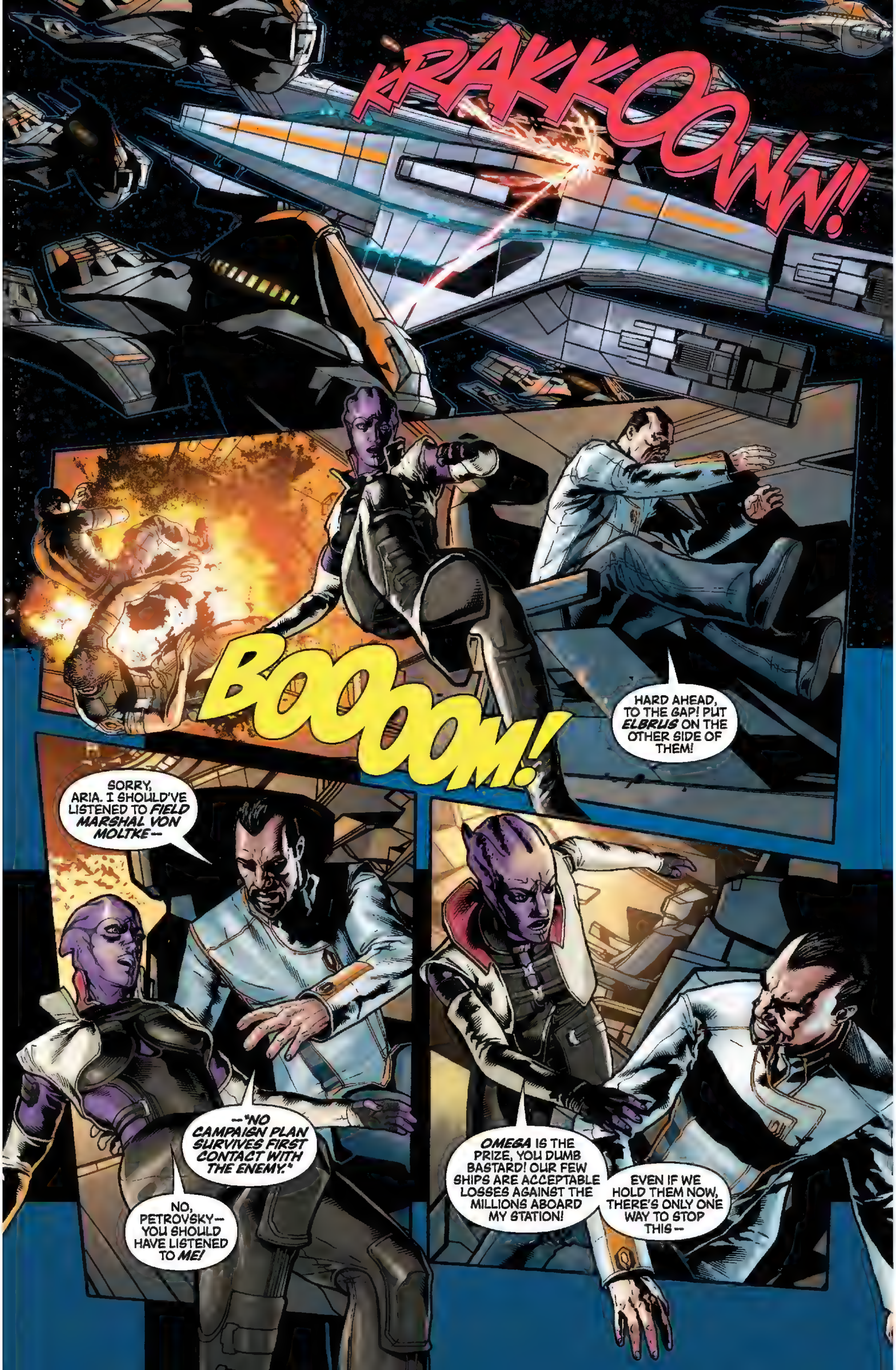

--OR MAYBE THIS IS EXACTLY WHERE I WANT TO BE!
GLLLKKK
KRCHOWWW!
GET HIM!
KRAAKKK
UNNHH!
URRKK!

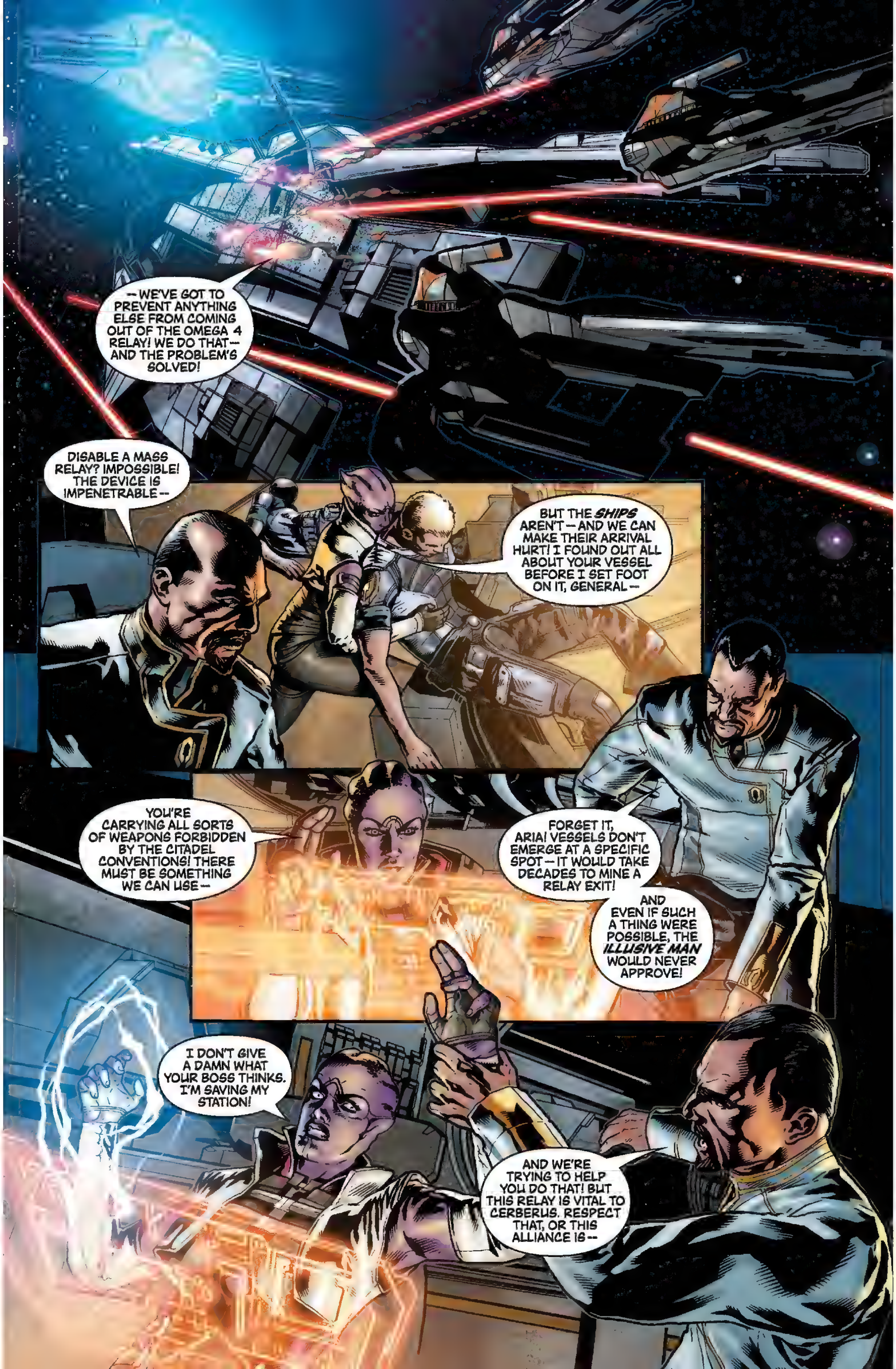

ALIENS. SO PREDICTABLE.
THIS IS AGENT ASHE, CALLING THE ILLUSIVE MAN--
—I'M READY TO START THE *REAL* BATTLE FOR OMEGA!

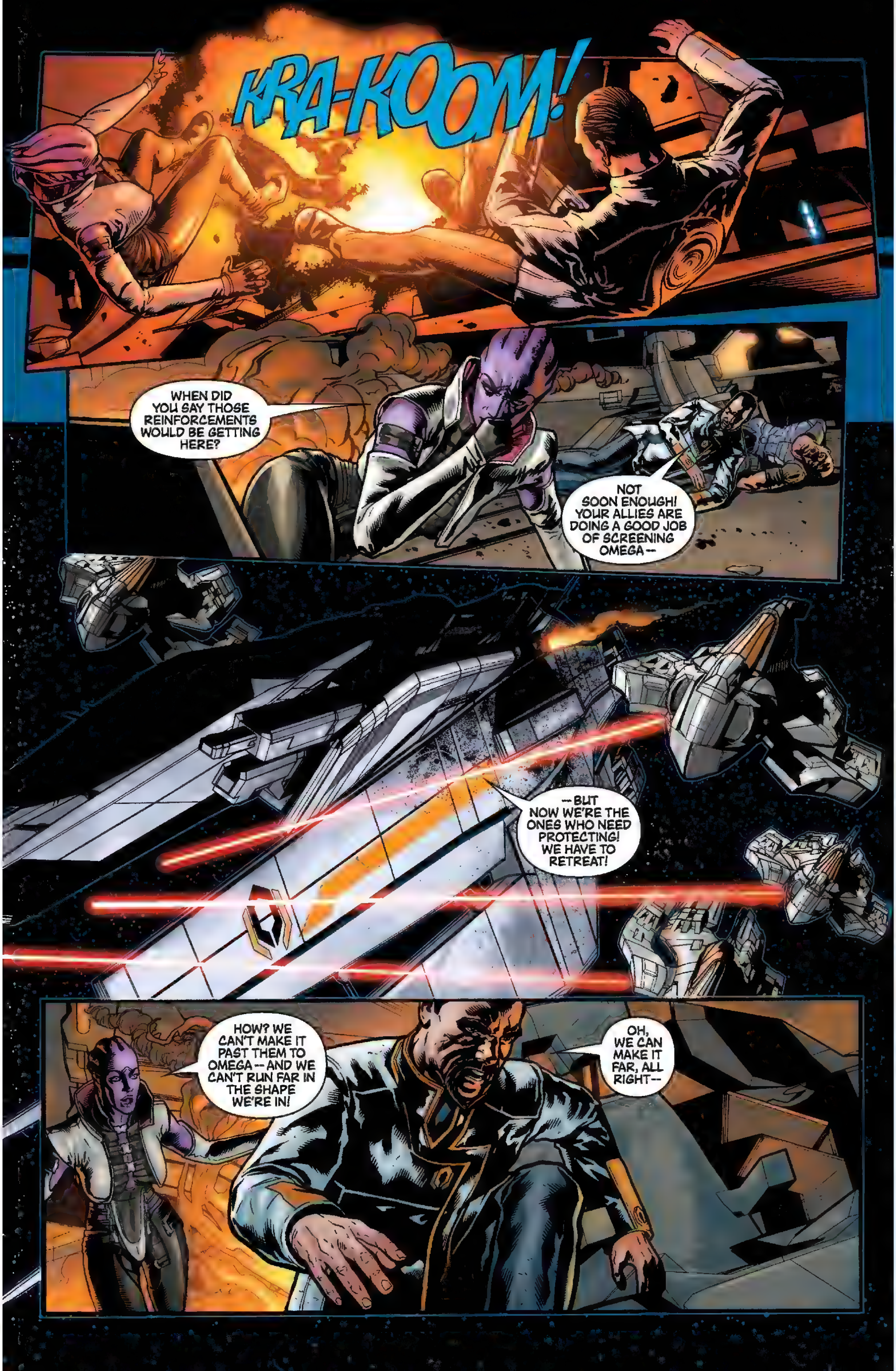

OMEGA HAD BEEN A BATTLEGROUND FOR CENTURIES -- BUT THOSE VYING TO CONTROL IT ALMOST ALWAYS LIVED ABOARD THE STATION ITSELF.
LONG BEFORE THE BLUE SUNS AND BLOOD PACK, RIVAL GANGS WITH FORGOTTEN NAMES BATTLED FOR CONTROL OF ITS MYRIAD LEVELS.
BUT TODAY, THE INVADER HAS COME FROM OUTSIDE THE STATION -- IN HIJACKED SHIPS FROM BEYOND THE MYSTERIOUS OMEGA 4 RELAY.
THERE CAN BE NO SHARING OF OMEGA WITH THIS INTRUDER, NO BROKERED TRUCE.
AND THAT FACT HAS DONE THE IMPOSSIBLE, MOTIVATING HATED ENEMIES TO JOIN TOGETHER IN OMEGA'S DEFENSE.
THAT FACT --

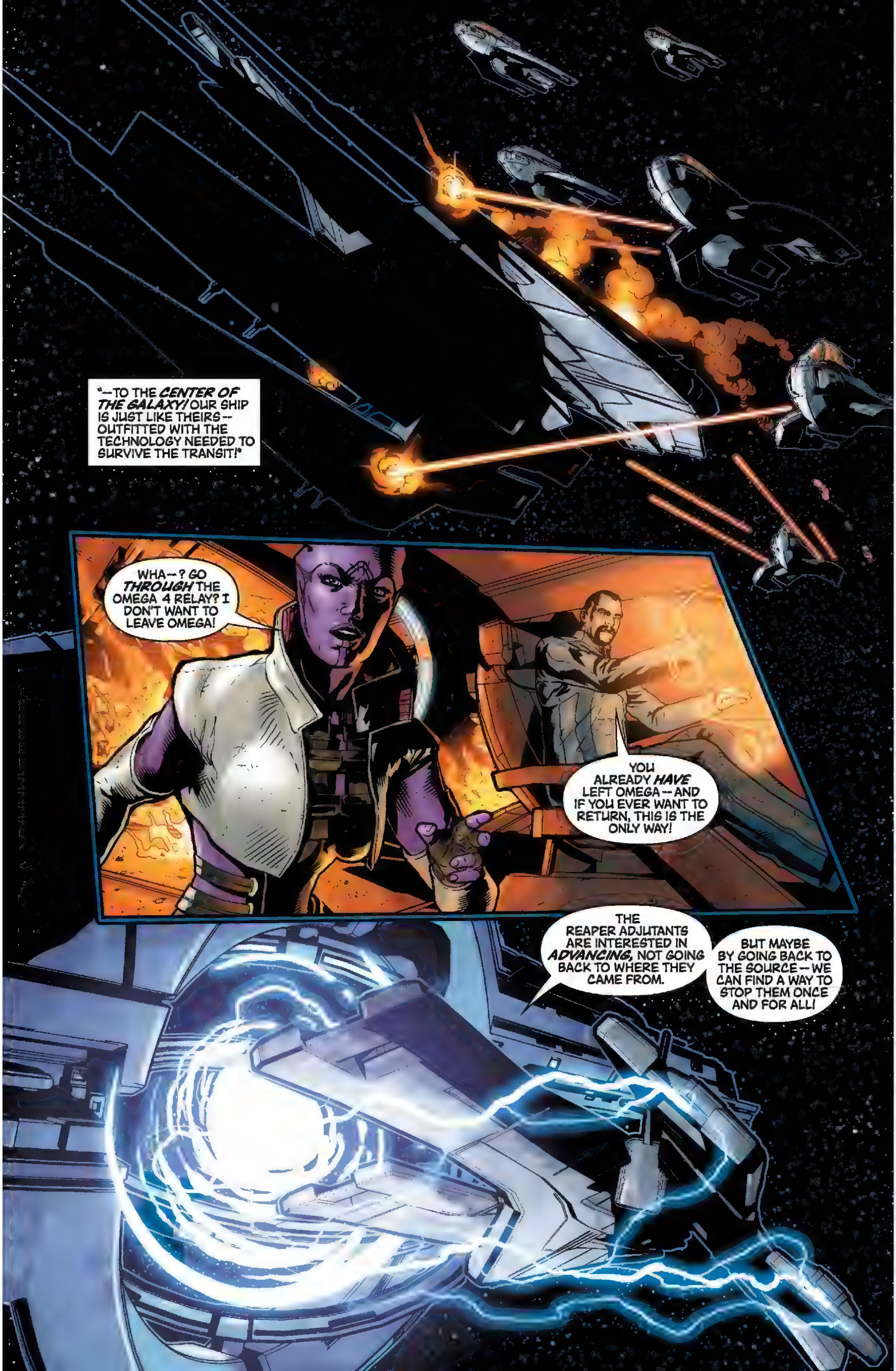

--AND THE RIGHT PERSON DOING THE MOTIVATING...
THAT'S IT! DON'T LET ANY OF THEM THROUGH! HOLD NOTHING BACK!
YOUR ALLIES AREN'T MUCH FOR STRATEGY OR FIREPOWER, ARIA --BUT I'LL GIVE THEM POINTS FOR ENTHUSIASM!
THEY WON'T DIE FOR OMEGA, *GENERAL PETROVSKY,* NOR FOR ME. BUT THEY KNOW I CAN DO A LOT FOR THEM IF THEY SUCCEED--
--AND I'LL DO A LOT *TO* THEM IF THEY FAIL!

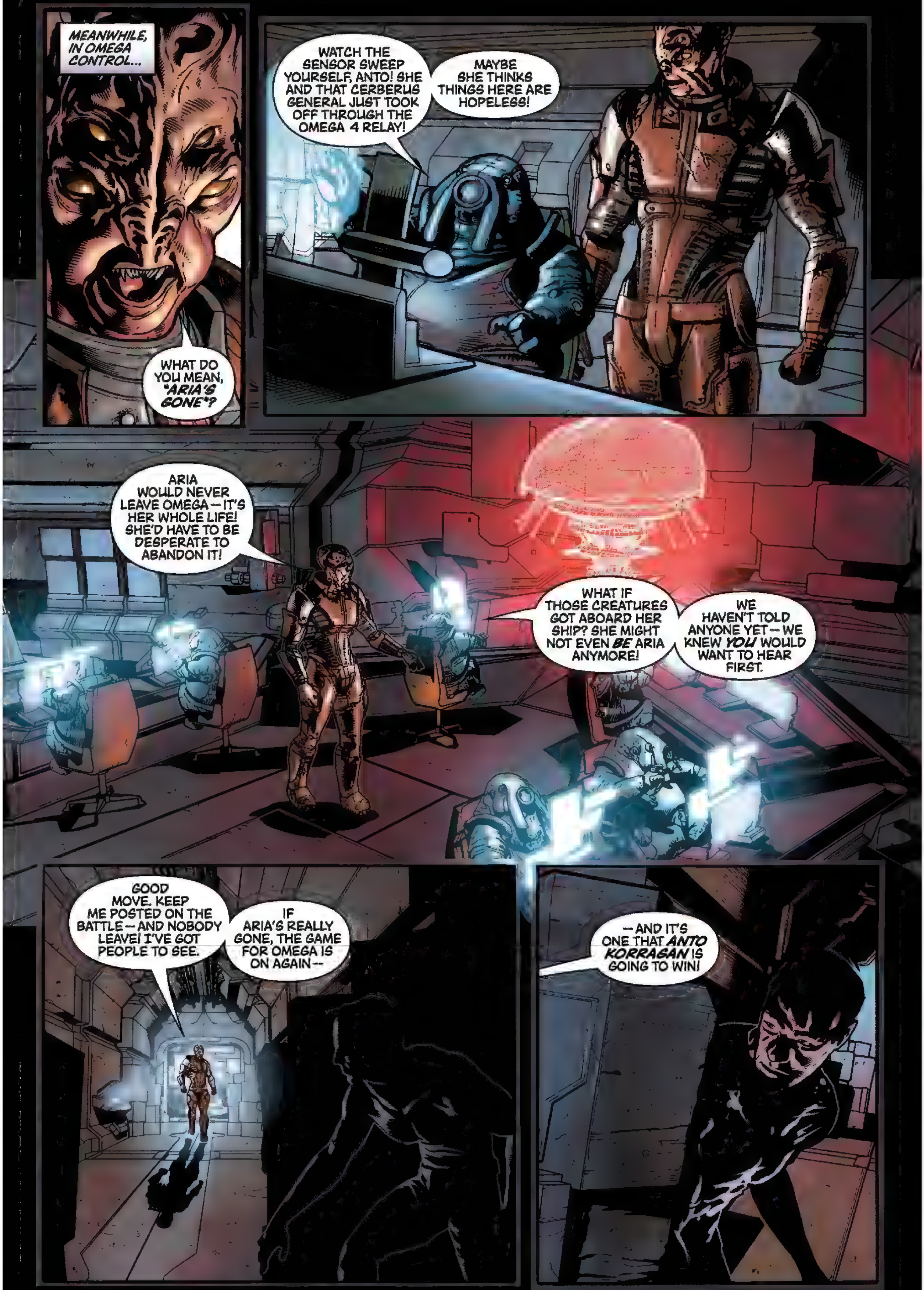

WHY AREN'T THEY FIRING BACK?
THE *REAPER ADJUTANTS* ARE STILL FIGURING OUT THE CONTROLS OF THEIR STOLEN VESSELS --
-- AND THEIR GOAL IS TO TRANSFORM OTHER LIFE FORMS. WE'RE NO GOOD TO THEM DEAD. WE CAN USE THAT!
APPROACH THE LARGER VESSELS! SAVE OUR FIRE FOR CLOSE RANGE!
THAT'S IT. ALL BATTERIES, STAND BY TO --

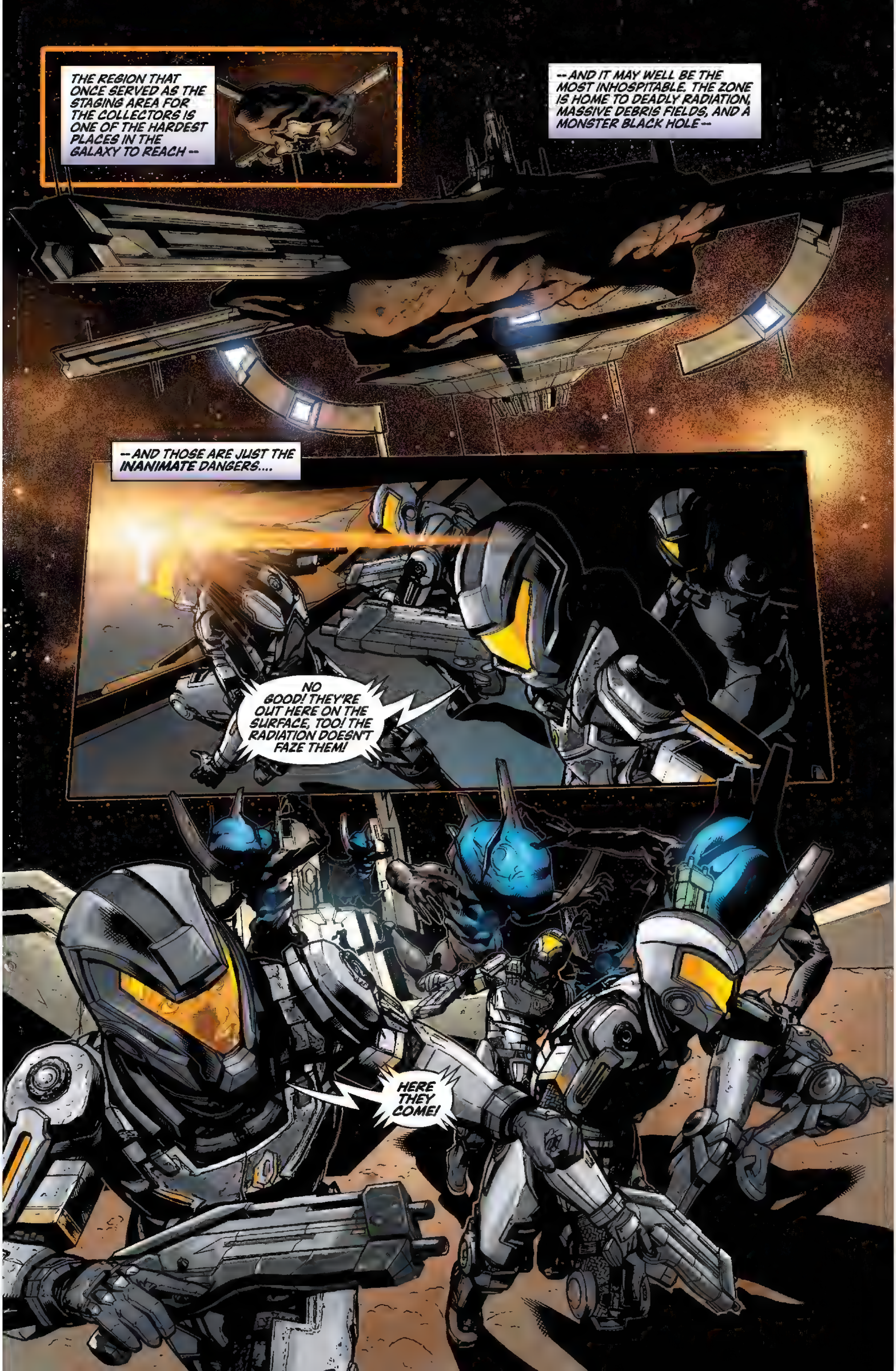

KRAKKOOWW!
BOOOOOM!
HARD AHEAD, TO THE GAP! PUT *ELBRUS* ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THEM!
SORRY, ARIA. I SHOULD'VE LISTENED TO *FIELD MARSHAL VON MOLTKE*--
--*"NO CAMPAIGN PLAN SURVIVES FIRST CONTACT WITH THE ENEMY."*
NO, PETROVSKY-- YOU SHOULD HAVE LISTENED TO *ME!*
OMEGA IS THE PRIZE, YOU DUMB BASTARD! OUR FEW SHIPS ARE ACCEPTABLE LOSSES AGAINST THE MILLIONS ABOARD MY STATION!
EVEN IF WE HOLD THEM NOW, THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO STOP THIS--

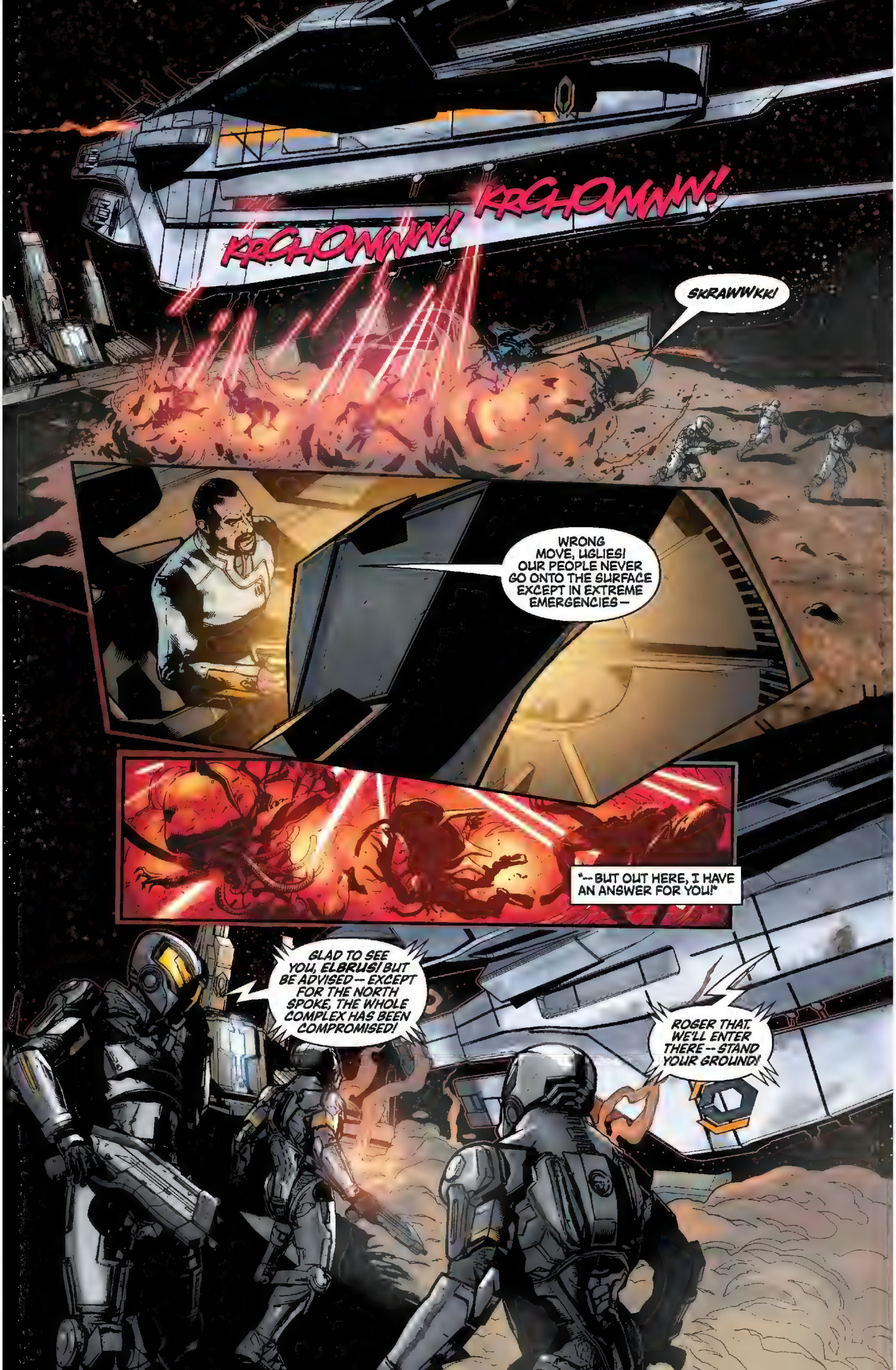

-- WE'VE GOT TO PREVENT ANYTHING ELSE FROM COMING OUT OF THE OMEGA 4 RELAY! WE DO THAT-- AND THE PROBLEM'S SOLVED!
DISABLE A MASS RELAY? IMPOSSIBLE! THE DEVICE IS IMPENETRABLE--
BUT THE *SHIPS* AREN'T -- AND WE CAN MAKE THEIR ARRIVAL HURT! I FOUND OUT ALL ABOUT YOUR VESSEL BEFORE I SET FOOT ON IT, GENERAL--
YOU'RE CARRYING ALL SORTS OF WEAPONS FORBIDDEN BY THE CITADEL CONVENTIONS! THERE MUST BE SOMETHING WE CAN USE--
FORGET IT, ARIA! VESSELS DON'T EMERGE AT A SPECIFIC SPOT -- IT WOULD TAKE DECADES TO MINE A RELAY EXIT!
AND EVEN IF SUCH A THING WERE POSSIBLE, THE *ILLUSIVE MAN* WOULD NEVER APPROVE!
I DON'T GIVE A DAMN WHAT YOUR BOSS THINKS. I'M SAVING MY STATION!
AND WE'RE TRYING TO HELP YOU DO THAT! BUT THIS RELAY IS VITAL TO CERBERUS. RESPECT THAT, OR THIS ALLIANCE IS--

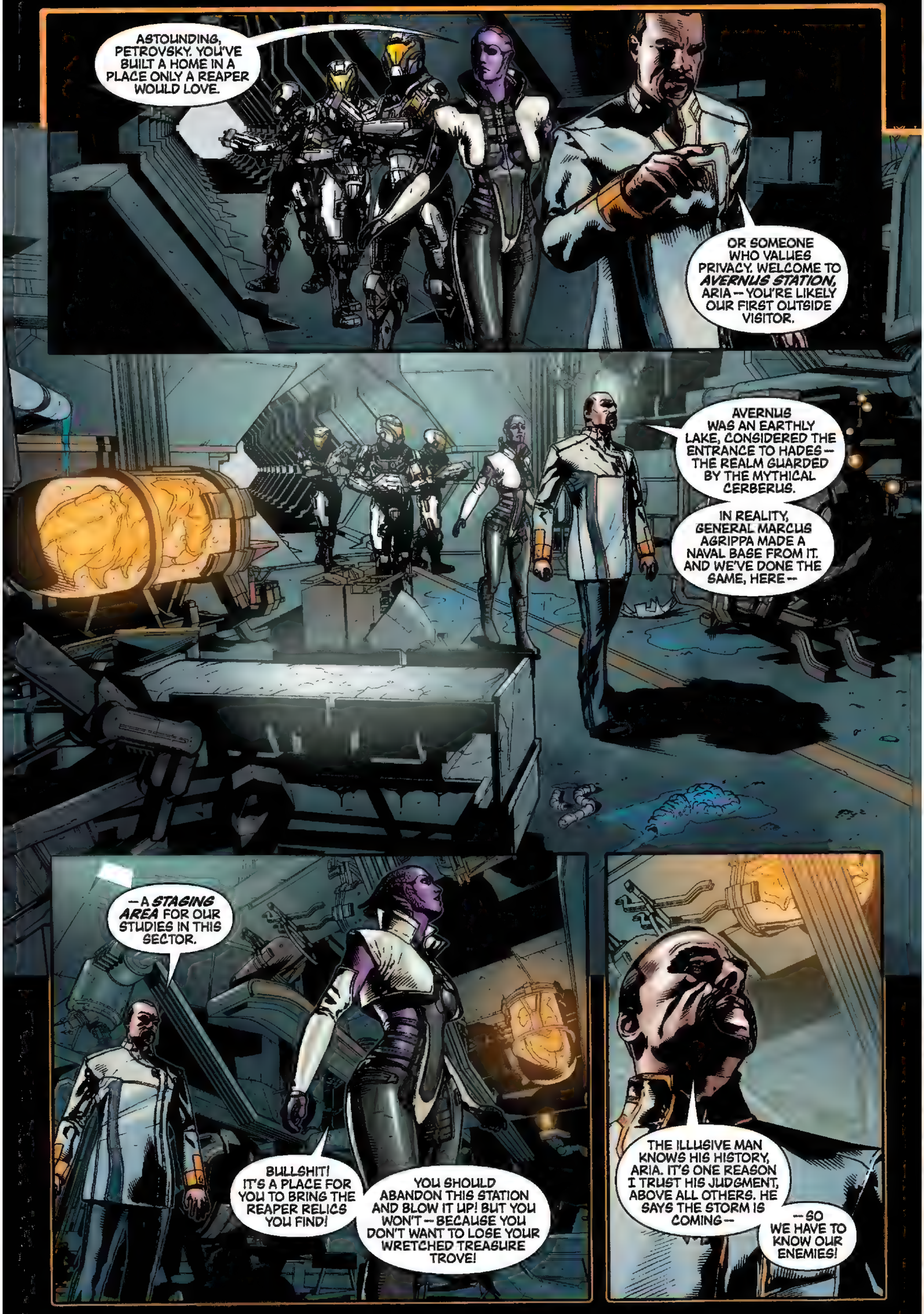

KRA-KOOM!
WHEN DID YOU SAY THOSE REINFORCEMENTS WOULD BE GETTING HERE?
NOT SOON ENOUGH! YOUR ALLIES ARE DOING A GOOD JOB OF SCREENING OMEGA--
--BUT NOW WE'RE THE ONES WHO NEED PROTECTING! WE HAVE TO RETREAT!
HOW? WE CAN'T MAKE IT PAST THEM TO OMEGA--AND WE CAN'T RUN FAR IN THE SHAPE WE'RE IN!
OH, WE CAN MAKE IT FAR, ALL RIGHT--

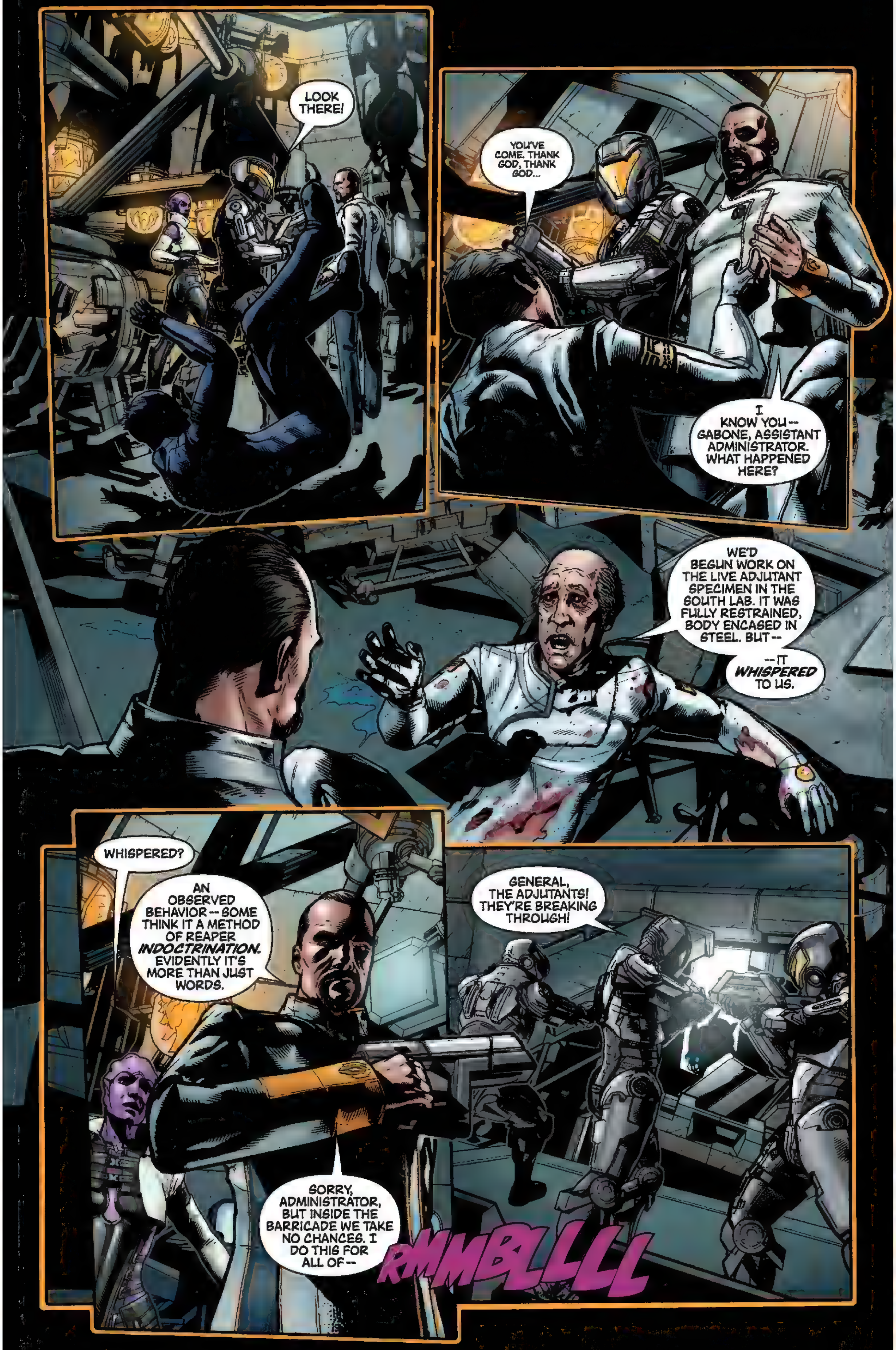

"--TO THE *CENTER OF THE GALAXY!* OUR SHIP IS JUST LIKE THEIRS -- OUTFITTED WITH THE TECHNOLOGY NEEDED TO SURVIVE THE TRANSIT!"
WHA--? GO *THROUGH* THE OMEGA 4 RELAY? I DON'T WANT TO LEAVE OMEGA!
YOU ALREADY *HAVE* LEFT OMEGA -- AND IF YOU EVER WANT TO RETURN, THIS IS THE ONLY WAY!
THE REAPER ADJUTANTS ARE INTERESTED IN *ADVANCING,* NOT GOING BACK TO WHERE THEY CAME FROM.
BUT MAYBE BY GOING BACK TO THE SOURCE -- WE CAN FIND A WAY TO STOP THEM ONCE AND FOR ALL!

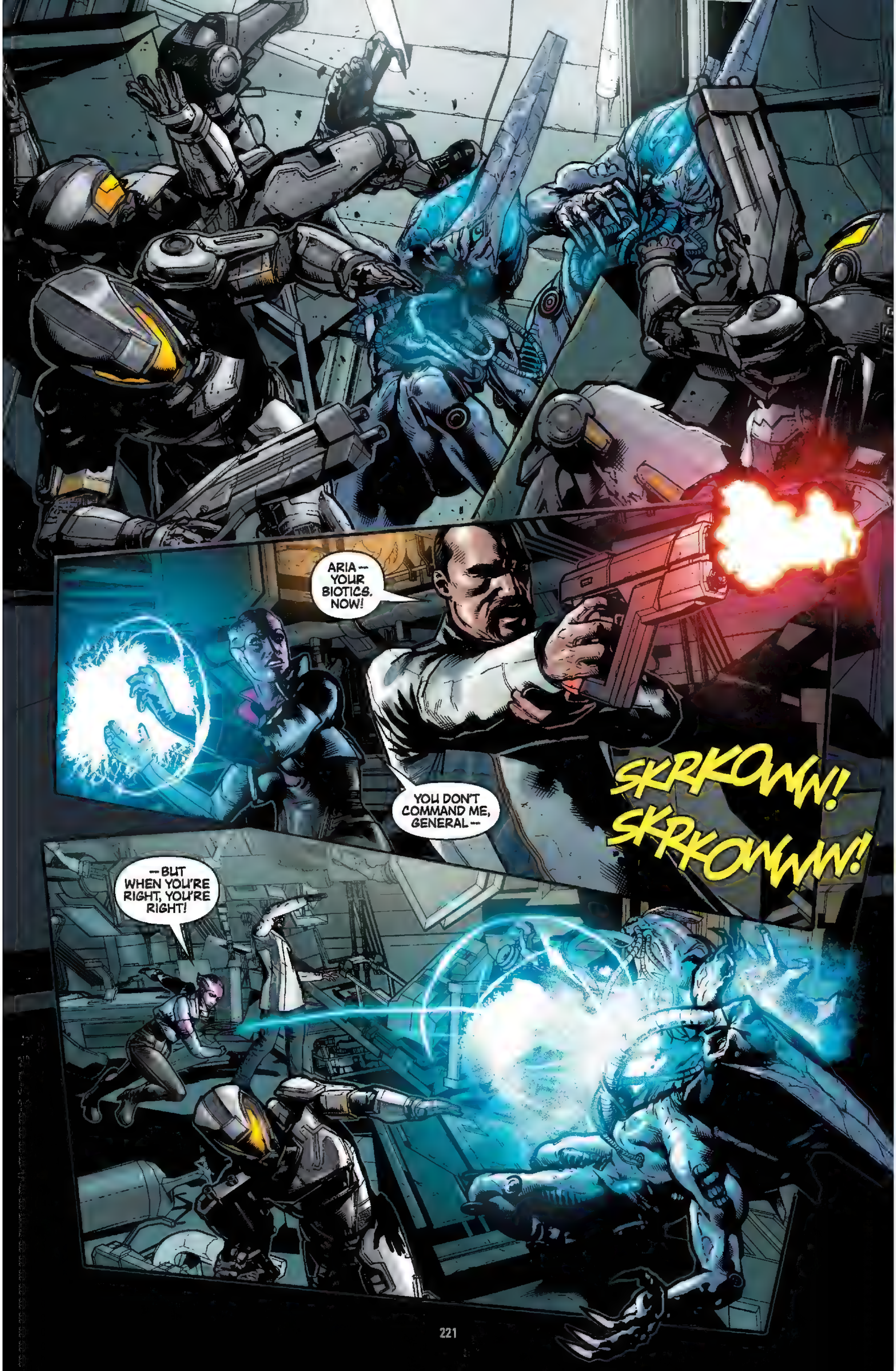

MEANWHILE, IN OMEGA CONTROL...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, *"ARIA'S GONE"*?
WATCH THE SENSOR SWEEP YOURSELF, ANTO! SHE AND THAT CERBERUS GENERAL JUST TOOK OFF THROUGH THE OMEGA 4 RELAY!
MAYBE SHE THINKS THINGS HERE ARE HOPELESS!
ARIA WOULD NEVER LEAVE OMEGA -- IT'S HER WHOLE LIFE! SHE'D HAVE TO BE DESPERATE TO ABANDON IT!
WHAT IF THOSE CREATURES GOT ABOARD HER SHIP? SHE MIGHT NOT EVEN *BE* ARIA ANYMORE!
WE HAVEN'T TOLD ANYONE YET -- WE KNEW *YOU* WOULD WANT TO HEAR FIRST.
GOOD MOVE. KEEP ME POSTED ON THE BATTLE -- AND NOBODY LEAVE! I'VE GOT PEOPLE TO SEE.
IF ARIA'S REALLY GONE, THE GAME FOR OMEGA IS ON AGAIN --
-- AND IT'S ONE THAT *ANTO KORRAGAN* IS GOING TO WIN!

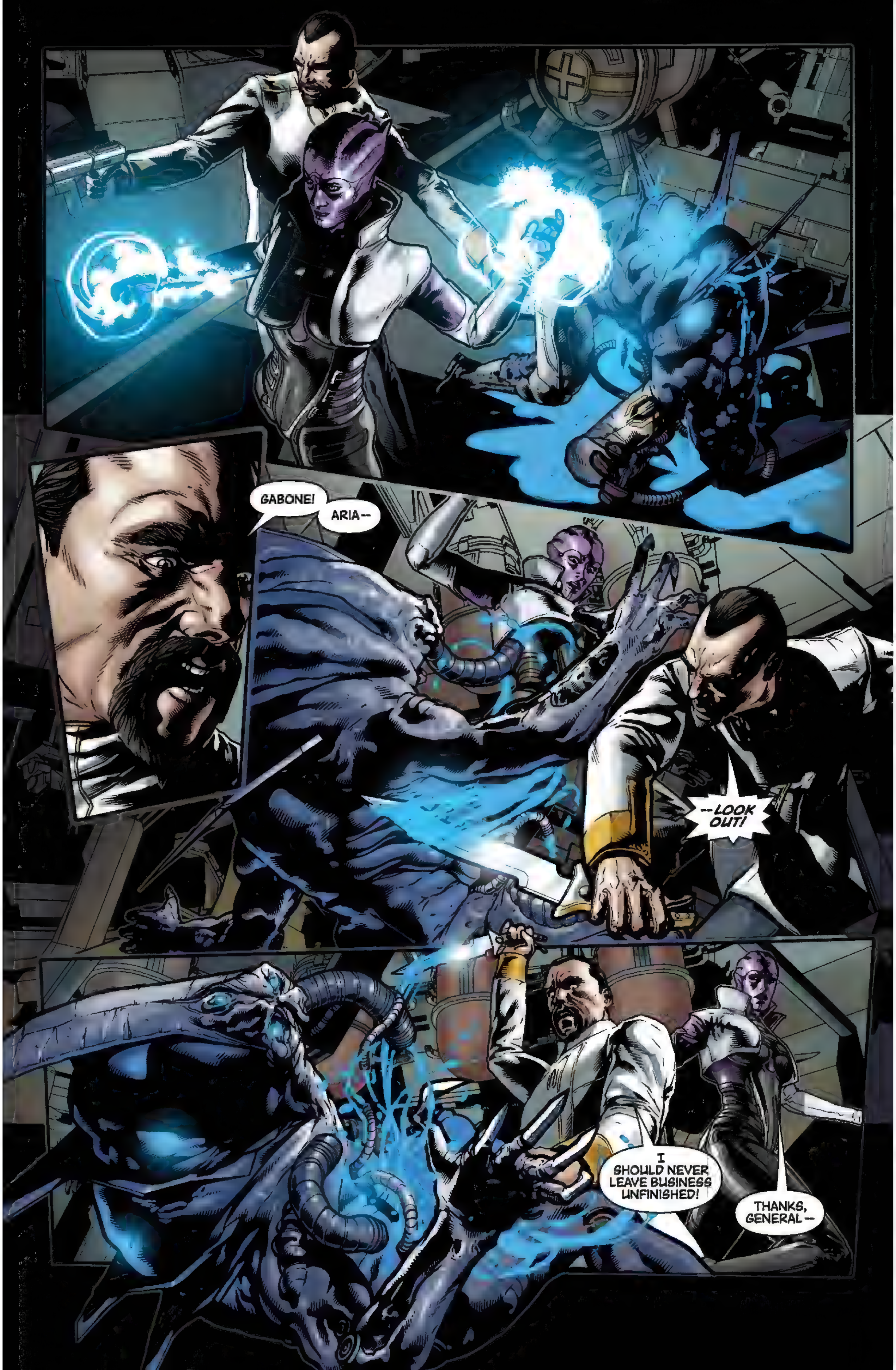

THE REGION THAT ONCE SERVED AS THE STAGING AREA FOR THE COLLECTORS IS ONE OF THE HARDEST PLACES IN THE GALAXY TO REACH --
-- AND IT MAY WELL BE THE MOST INHOSPITABLE. THE ZONE IS HOME TO DEADLY RADIATION, MASSIVE DEBRIS FIELDS, AND A MONSTER BLACK HOLE --
-- AND THOSE ARE JUST THE *INANIMATE* DANGERS....
NO GOOD! THEY'RE OUT HERE ON THE SURFACE, TOO! THE RADIATION DOESN'T FAZE THEM!
HERE THEY COME!

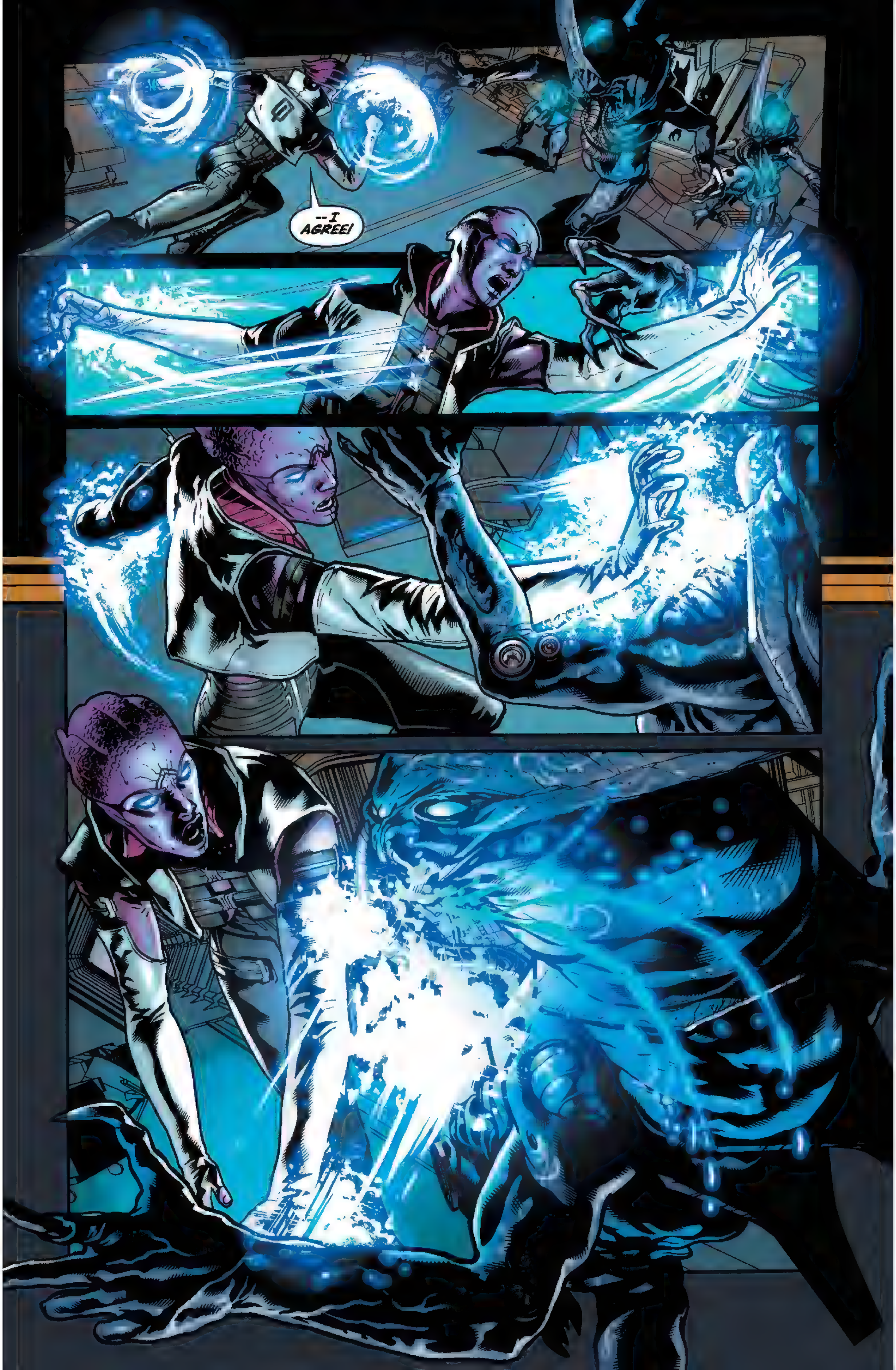

KRCHOWWW! KRCHOWWW!
SKRAWWKK!
WRONG MOVE, UGLIES! OUR PEOPLE NEVER GO ONTO THE SURFACE EXCEPT IN EXTREME EMERGENCIES --
"-- BUT OUT HERE, I HAVE AN ANSWER FOR YOU!"
GLAD TO SEE YOU, ELBRUS! BUT BE ADVISED -- EXCEPT FOR THE NORTH SPOKE, THE WHOLE COMPLEX HAS BEEN COMPROMISED!
ROGER THAT. WE'LL ENTER THERE -- STAND YOUR GROUND!

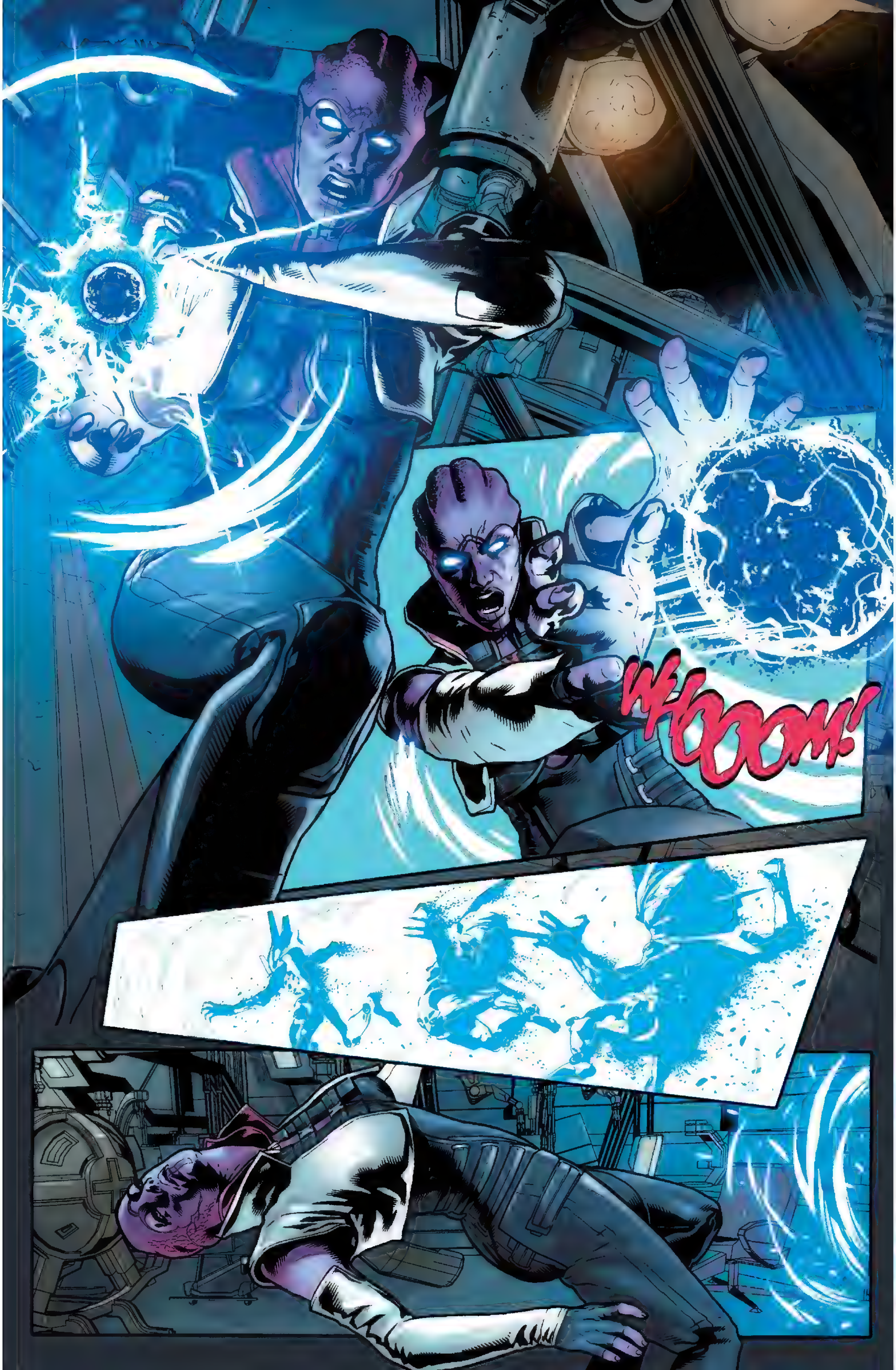

ASTOUNDING, PETROVSKY. YOU'VE BUILT A HOME IN A PLACE ONLY A REAPER WOULD LOVE.
OR SOMEONE WHO VALUES PRIVACY. WELCOME TO *AVERNUS STATION,* ARIA -- YOU'RE LIKELY OUR FIRST OUTSIDE VISITOR.
AVERNUS WAS AN EARTHLY LAKE, CONSIDERED THE ENTRANCE TO HADES -- THE REALM GUARDED BY THE MYTHICAL CERBERUS.
IN REALITY, GENERAL MARCUS AGRIPPA MADE A NAVAL BASE FROM IT. AND WE'VE DONE THE SAME, HERE --
-- A *STAGING AREA* FOR OUR STUDIES IN THIS SECTOR.
BULLSHIT! IT'S A PLACE FOR YOU TO BRING THE REAPER RELICS YOU FIND!
YOU SHOULD ABANDON THIS STATION AND BLOW IT UP! BUT YOU WON'T -- BECAUSE YOU DON'T WANT TO LOSE YOUR WRETCHED TREASURE TROVE!
THE ILLUSIVE MAN KNOWS HIS HISTORY, ARIA. IT'S ONE REASON I TRUST HIS JUDGMENT, ABOVE ALL OTHERS. HE SAYS THE STORM IS COMING --
-- SO WE HAVE TO KNOW OUR ENEMIES!

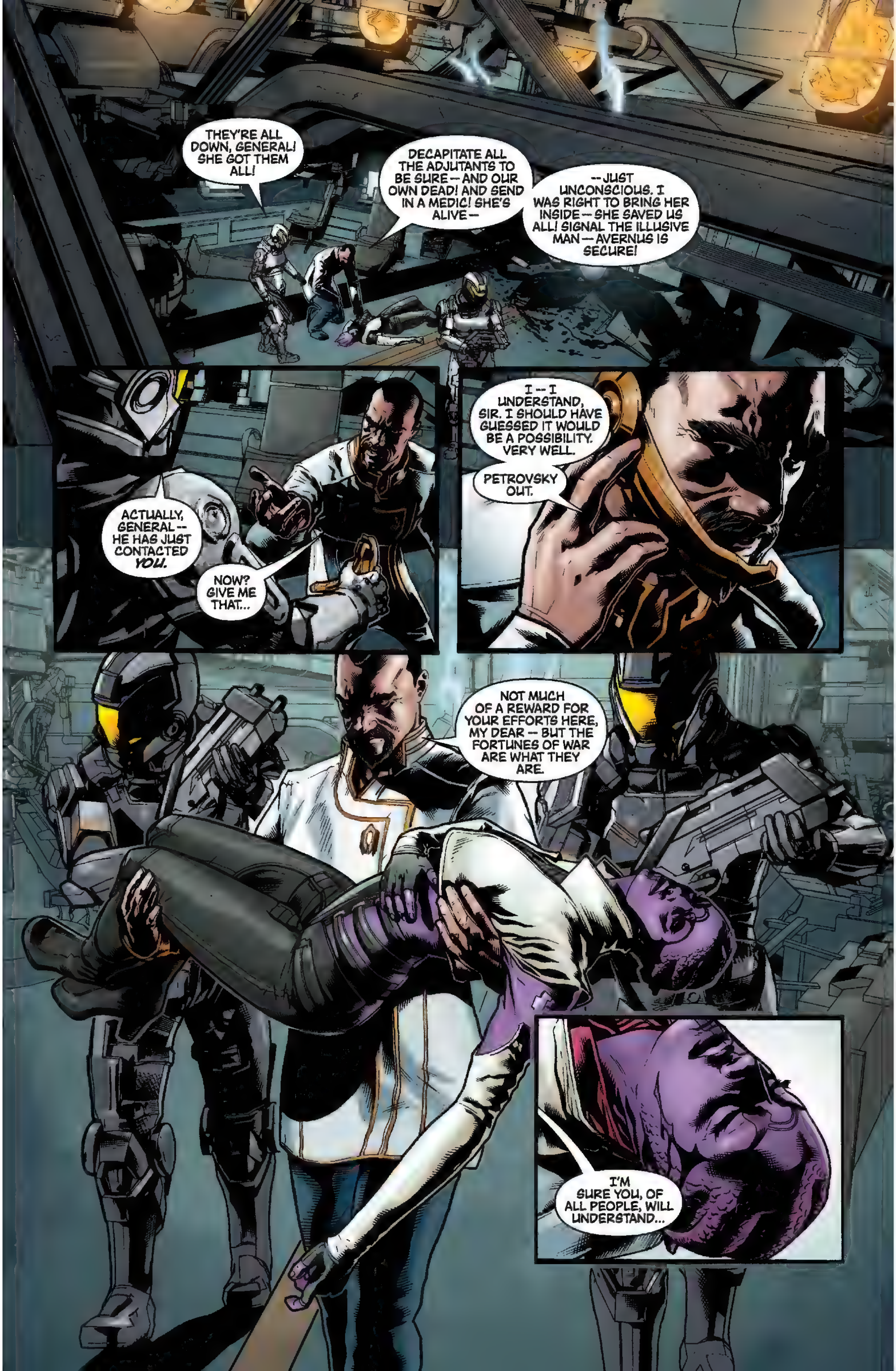

LOOK THERE!
YOU'VE COME. THANK GOD, THANK GOD...
I KNOW YOU -- GABONE, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR. WHAT HAPPENED HERE?
WE'D BEGUN WORK ON THE LIVE ADJUTANT SPECIMEN IN THE SOUTH LAB. IT WAS FULLY RESTRAINED, BODY ENCASED IN STEEL. BUT --
-- IT *WHISPERED* TO US.
WHISPERED?
AN OBSERVED BEHAVIOR -- SOME THINK IT A METHOD OF REAPER *INDOCTRINATION*. EVIDENTLY IT'S MORE THAN JUST WORDS.
SORRY, ADMINISTRATOR, BUT INSIDE THE BARRICADE WE TAKE NO CHANCES. I DO THIS FOR ALL OF --
GENERAL, THE ADJUTANTS! THEY'RE BREAKING THROUGH!
RMMBLLLL

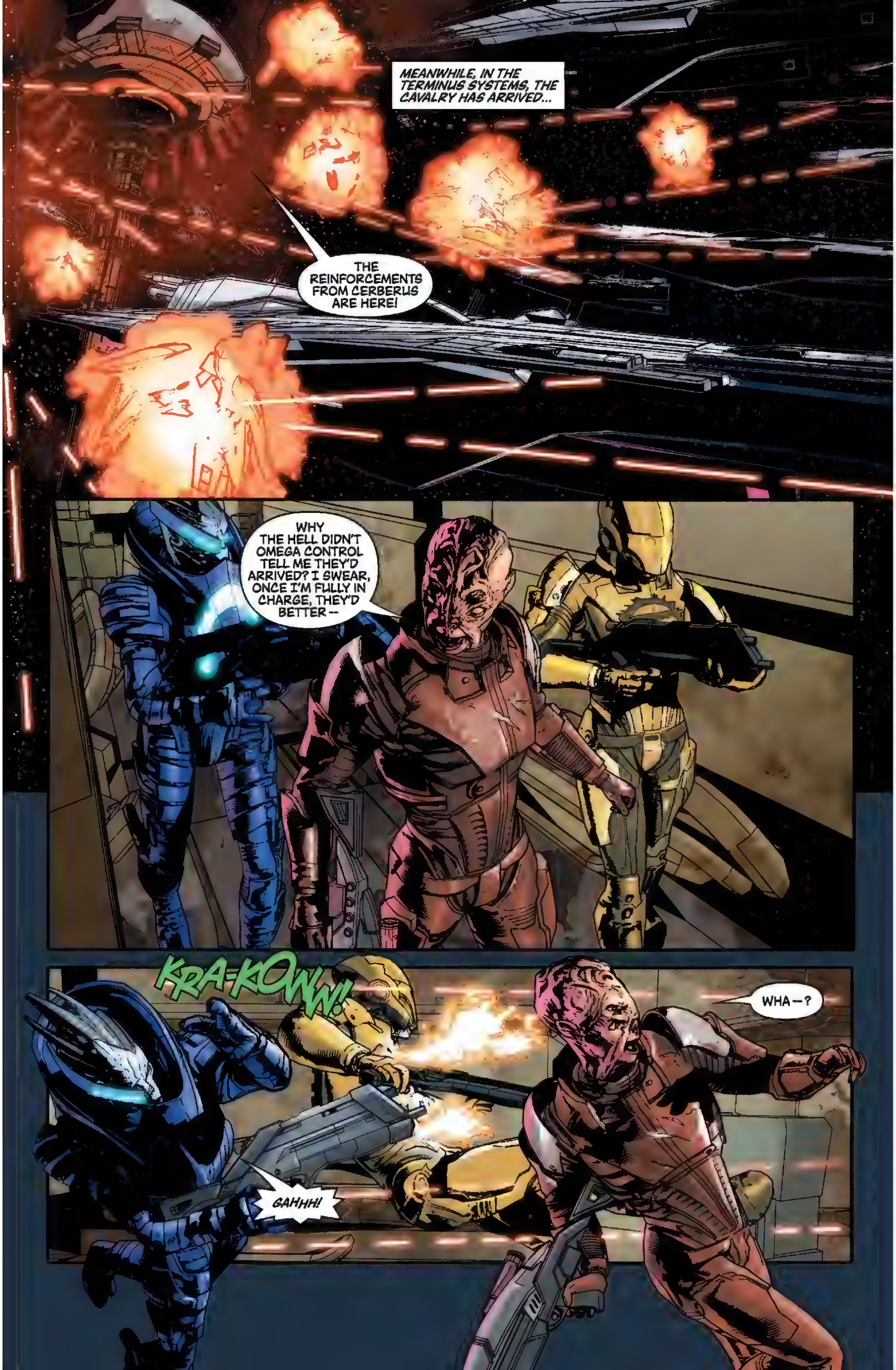

ARIA -- YOUR BIOTICS. NOW!
YOU DON'T COMMAND ME, GENERAL --
SKRKOWW! SKRKOWW!
-- BUT WHEN YOU'RE RIGHT, YOU'RE RIGHT!

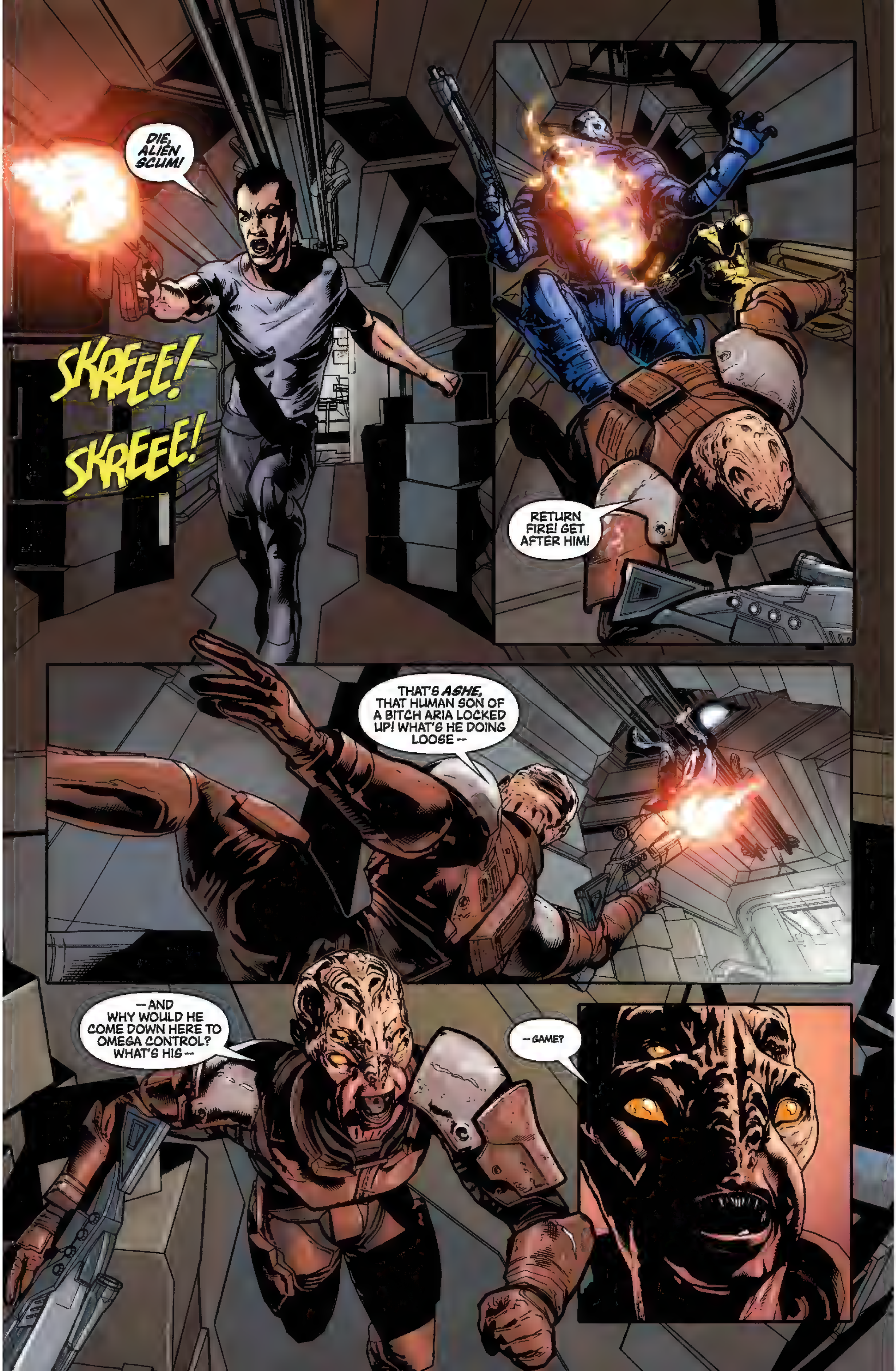

GABONE!
ARIA--
--LOOK OUT!
I SHOULD NEVER LEAVE BUSINESS UNFINISHED!
THANKS, GENERAL--

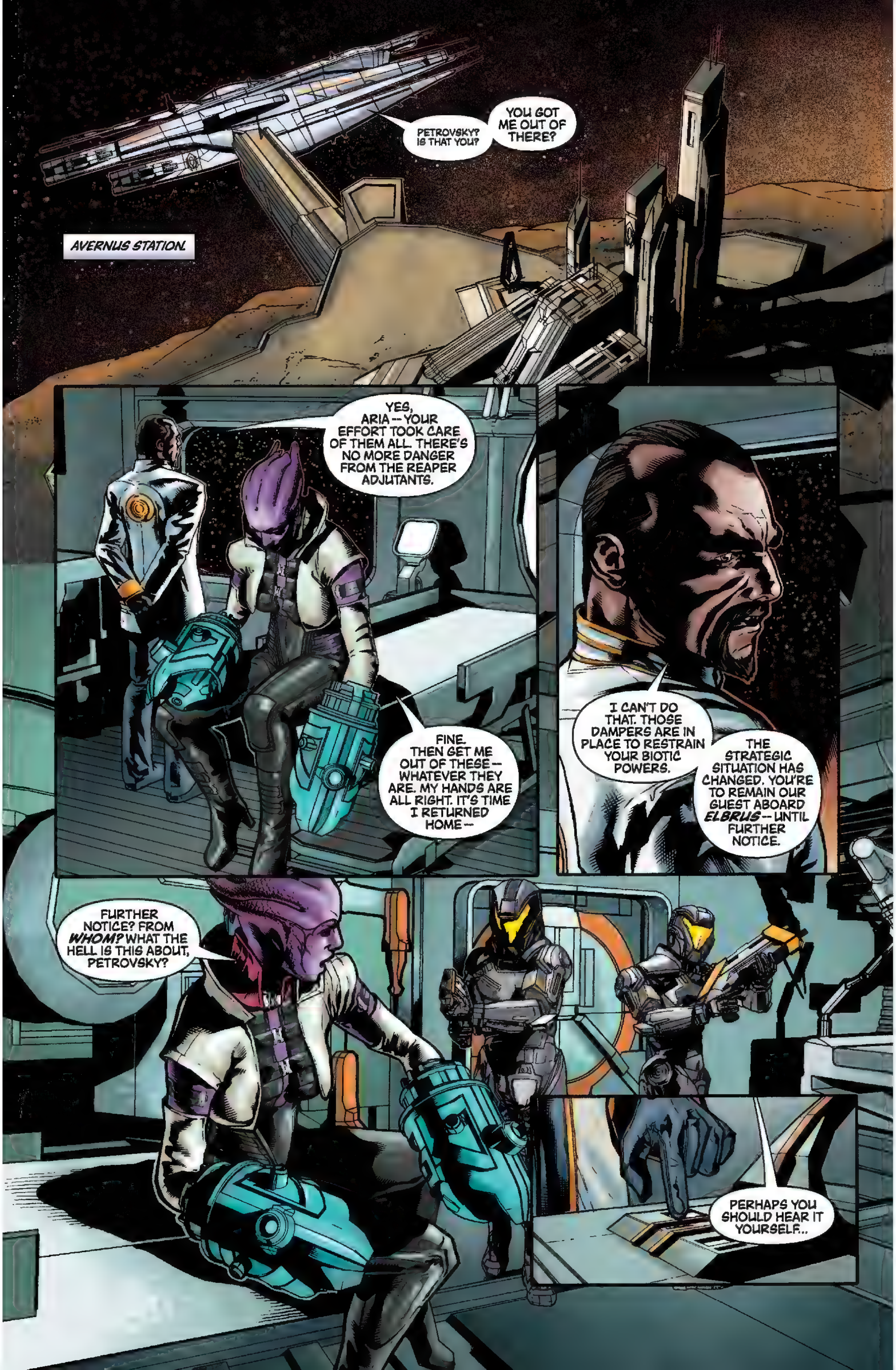

--I AGREE!

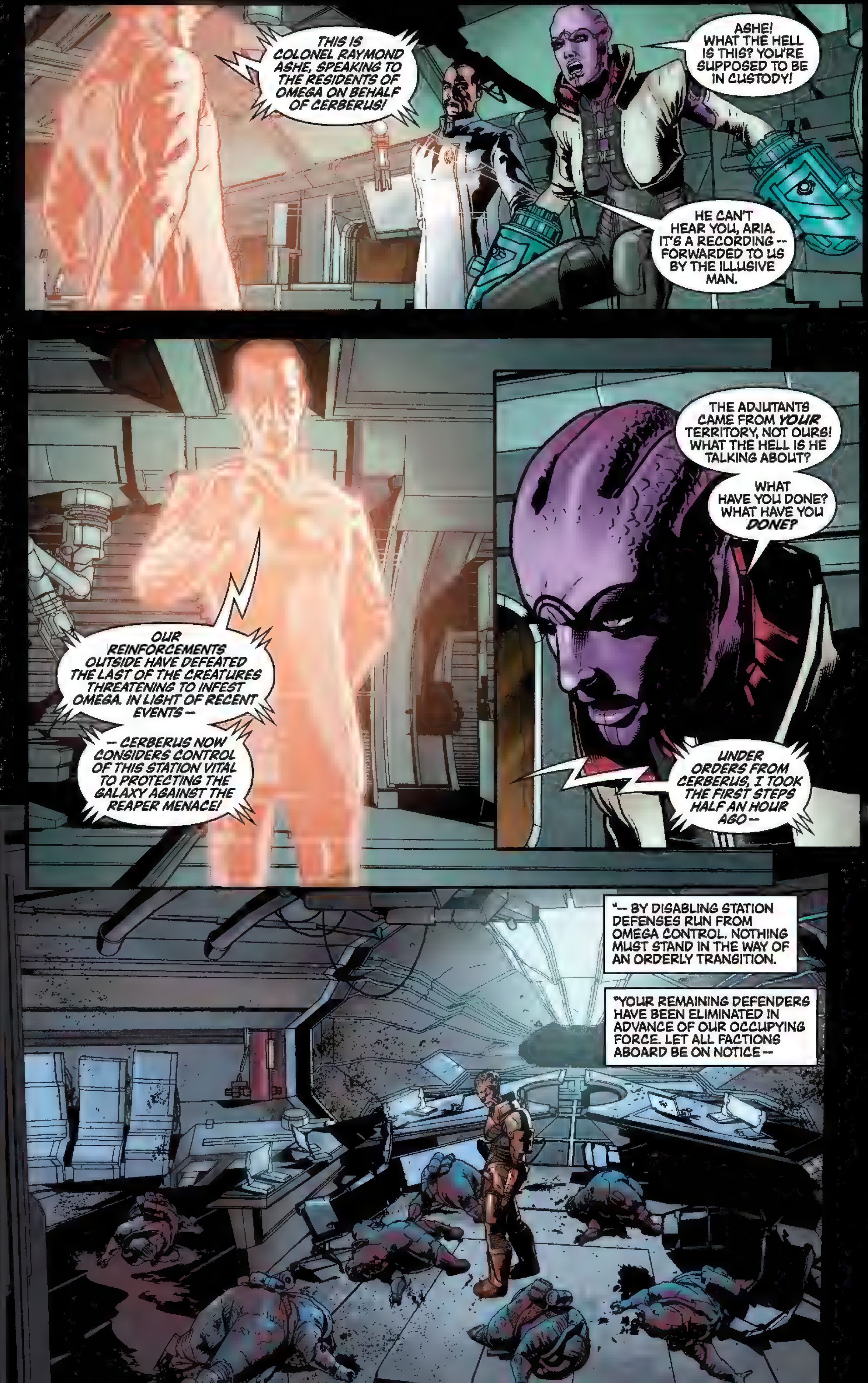

WHOOOM!

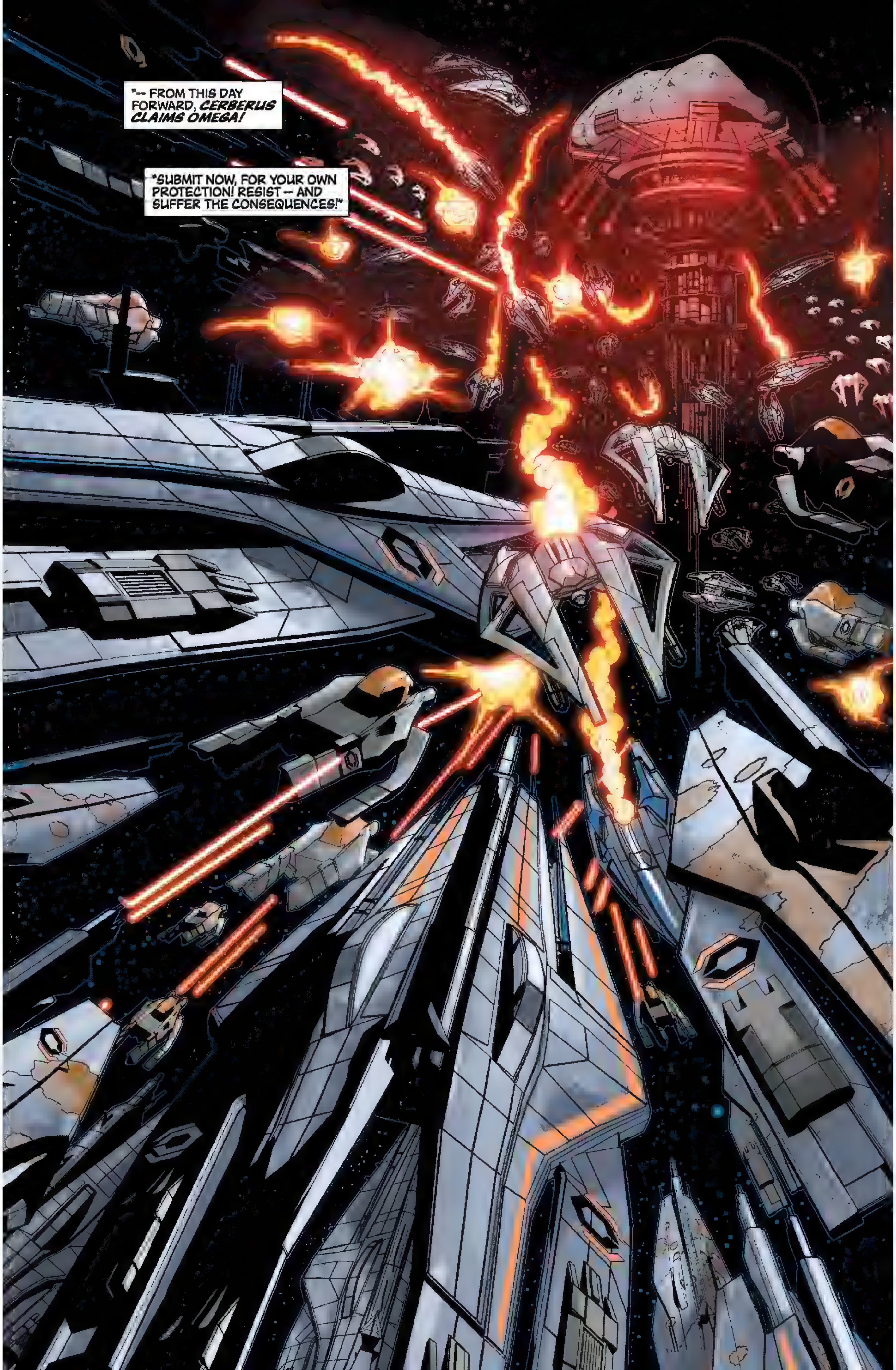

THEY'RE ALL DOWN, GENERAL! SHE GOT THEM ALL!
DECAPITATE ALL THE ADJUTANTS TO BE SURE -- AND OUR OWN DEAD! AND SEND IN A MEDIC! SHE'S ALIVE --
-- JUST UNCONSCIOUS. I WAS RIGHT TO BRING HER INSIDE -- SHE SAVED US ALL! SIGNAL THE ILLUSIVE MAN -- AVERNUS IS SECURE!
ACTUALLY, GENERAL -- HE HAS JUST CONTACTED *YOU.*
NOW? GIVE ME THAT...
I -- I UNDERSTAND, SIR. I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED IT WOULD BE A POSSIBILITY. VERY WELL.
PETROVSKY OUT.
NOT MUCH OF A REWARD FOR YOUR EFFORTS HERE, MY DEAR -- BUT THE FORTUNES OF WAR ARE WHAT THEY ARE.
I'M SURE YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, WILL UNDERSTAND...

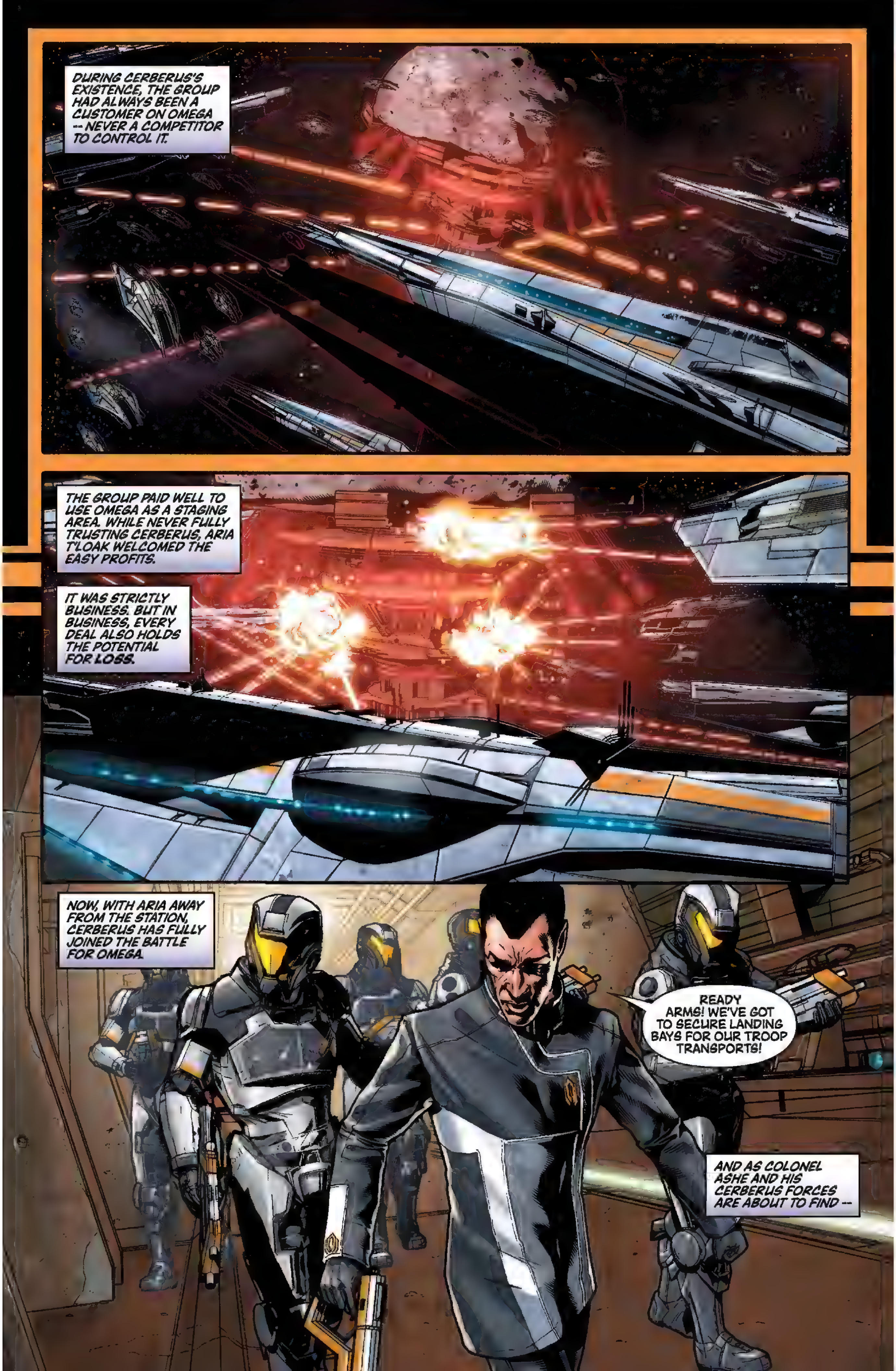

MEANWHILE, IN THE TERMINUS SYSTEMS, THE CAVALRY HAS ARRIVED...
THE REINFORCEMENTS FROM CERBERUS ARE HERE!
WHY THE HELL DIDN'T OMEGA CONTROL TELL ME THEY'D ARRIVED? I SWEAR, ONCE I'M FULLY IN CHARGE, THEY'D BETTER --
KRA-KOWW!
WHA--?
GAHHH!

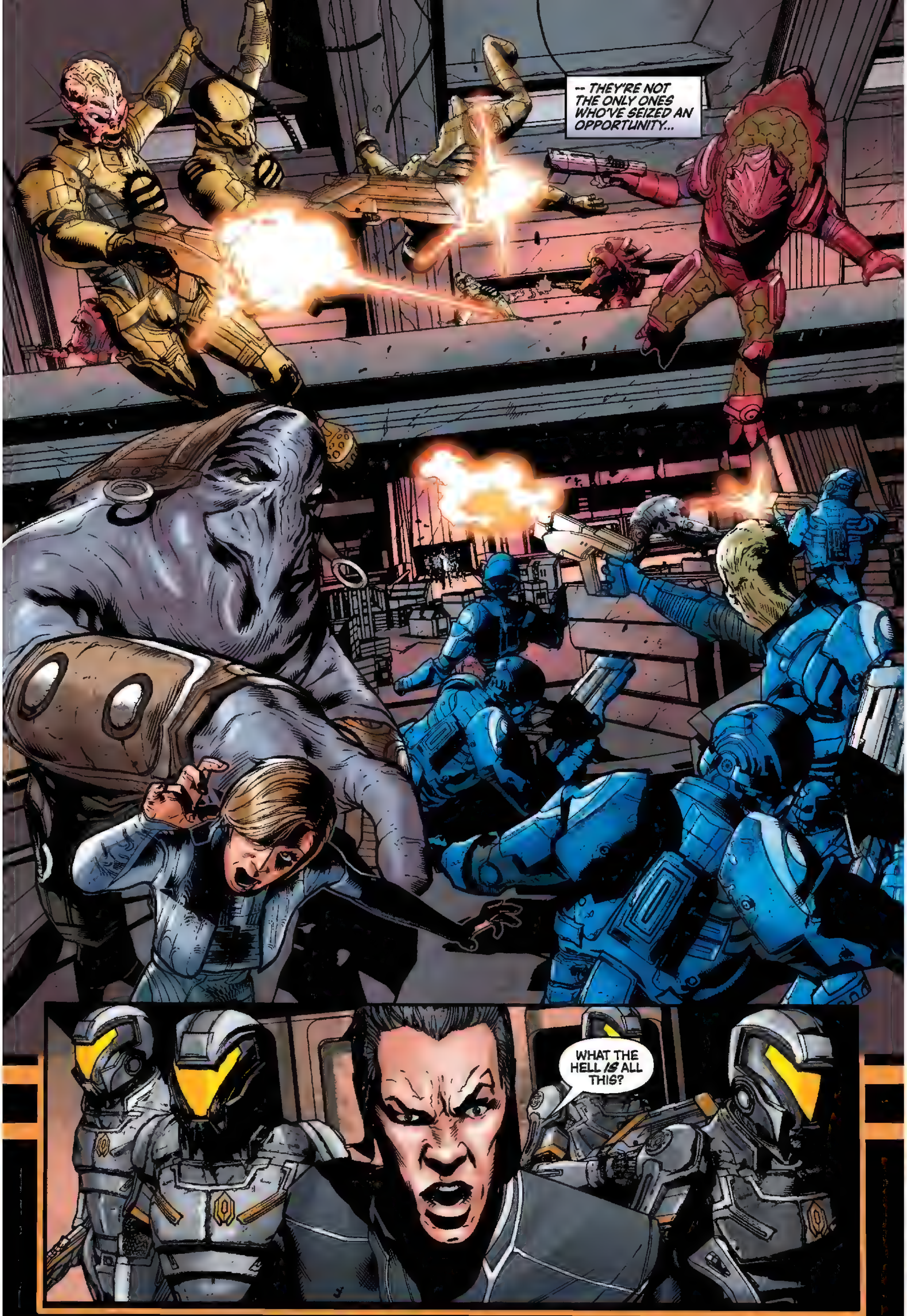

DIE, ALIEN SCUM!
SKREEE!
SKREEE!
RETURN FIRE! GET AFTER HIM!
THAT'S *ASHE*, THAT HUMAN SON OF A BITCH ARIA LOCKED UP! WHAT'S HE DOING LOOSE --
-- AND WHY WOULD HE COME DOWN HERE TO OMEGA CONTROL? WHAT'S HIS --
-- GAME?

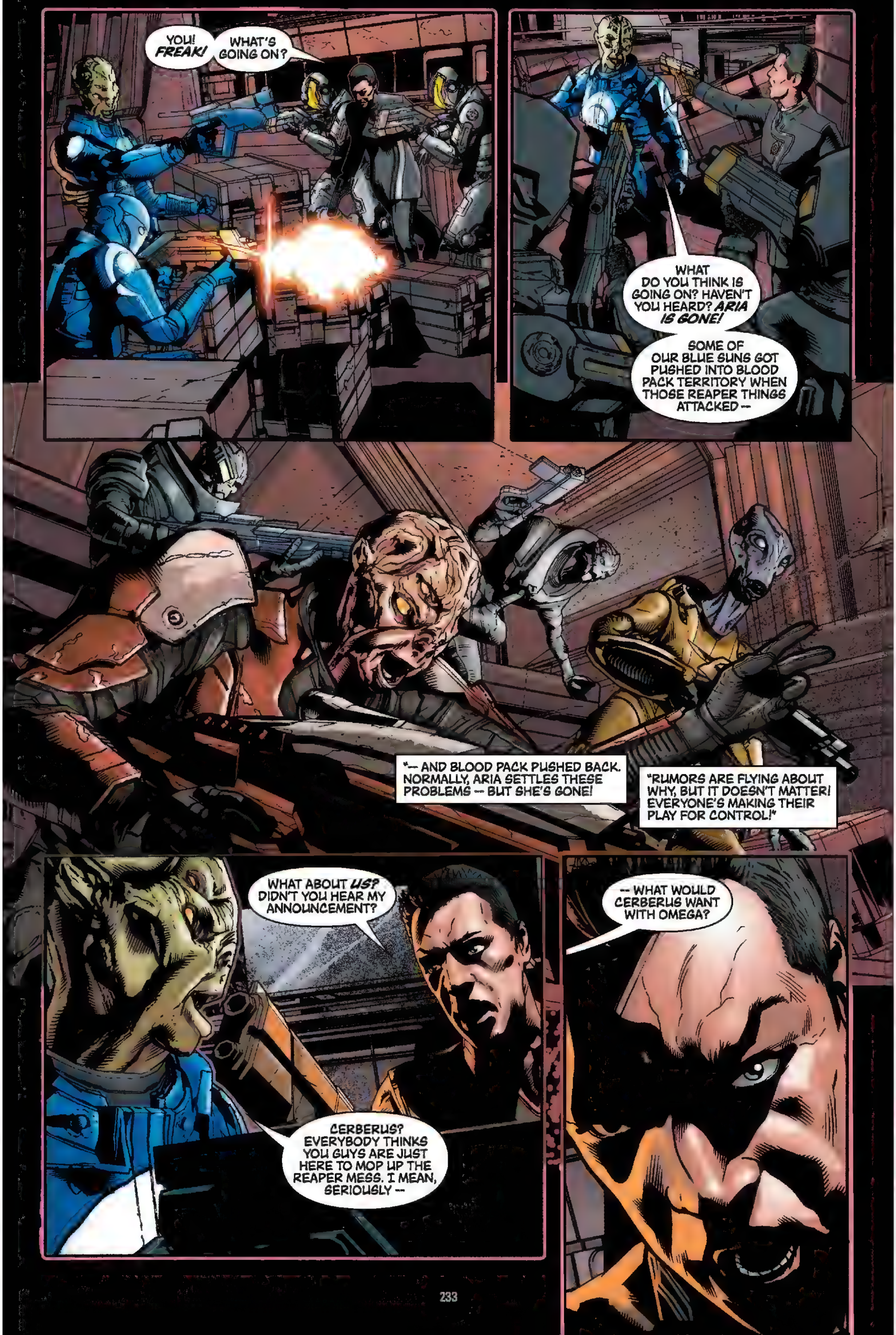

AVERNUS STATION.
PETROVSKY? IS THAT YOU?
YOU GOT ME OUT OF THERE?
YES, ARIA -- YOUR EFFORT TOOK CARE OF THEM ALL. THERE'S NO MORE DANGER FROM THE REAPER ADJUTANTS.
FINE. THEN GET ME OUT OF THESE -- WHATEVER THEY ARE. MY HANDS ARE ALL RIGHT. IT'S TIME I RETURNED HOME --
I CAN'T DO THAT. THOSE DAMPERS ARE IN PLACE TO RESTRAIN YOUR BIOTIC POWERS.
THE STRATEGIC SITUATION HAS CHANGED. YOU'RE TO REMAIN OUR GUEST ABOARD *ELBRUS* -- UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.
FURTHER NOTICE? FROM *WHOM?* WHAT THE HELL IS THIS ABOUT, PETROVSKY?
PERHAPS YOU SHOULD HEAR IT YOURSELF...

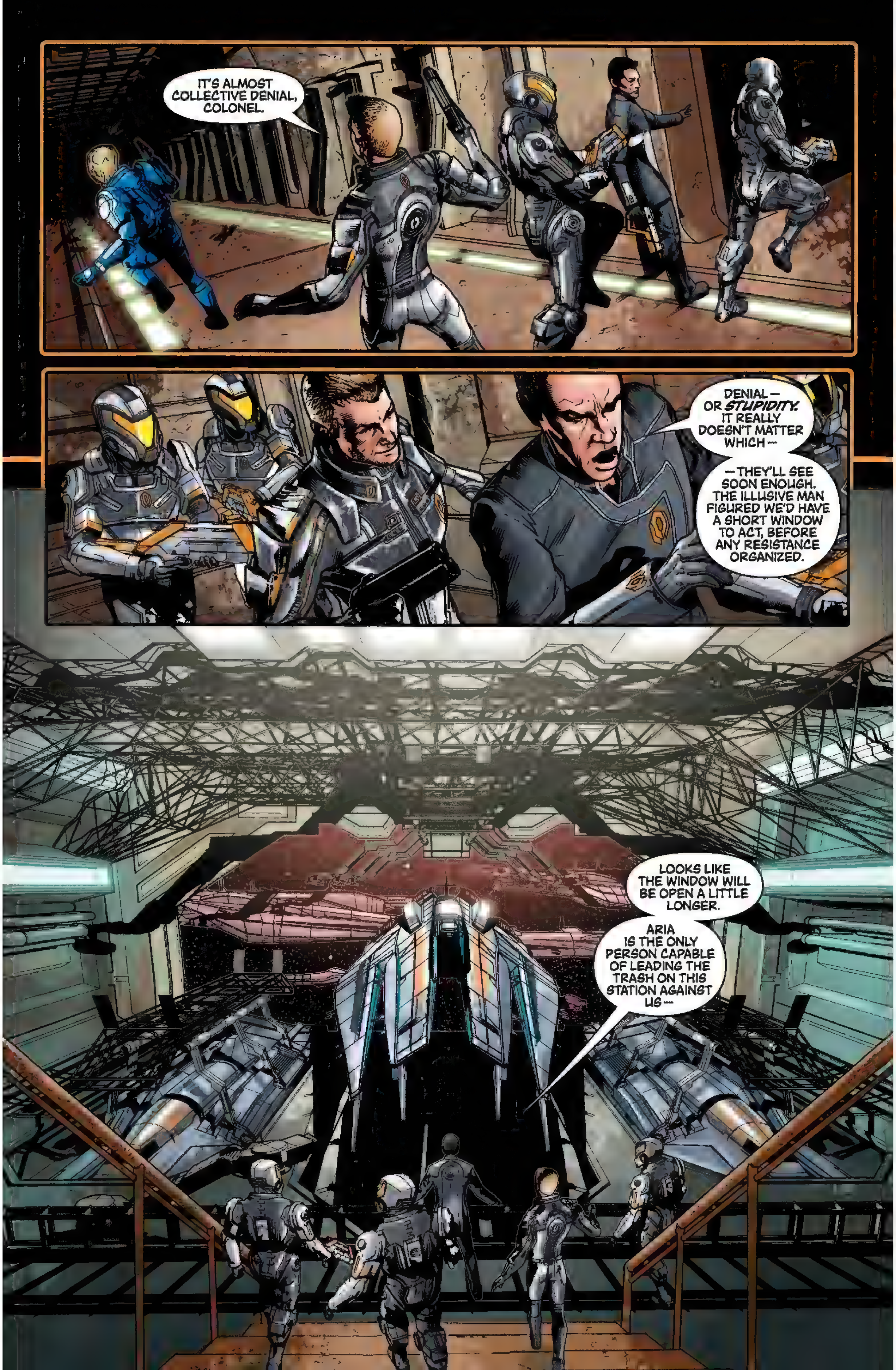

THIS IS COLONEL RAYMOND ASHE, SPEAKING TO THE RESIDENTS OF OMEGA ON BEHALF OF CERBERUS!
ASHE! WHAT THE HELL IS THIS? YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE IN CUSTODY!
HE CAN'T HEAR YOU, ARIA. IT'S A RECORDING -- FORWARDED TO US BY THE ILLUSIVE MAN.
OUR REINFORCEMENTS OUTSIDE HAVE DEFEATED THE LAST OF THE CREATURES THREATENING TO INFEST OMEGA. IN LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS --
-- CERBERUS NOW CONSIDERS CONTROL OF THIS STATION VITAL TO PROTECTING THE GALAXY AGAINST THE REAPER MENACE!
THE ADJUTANTS CAME FROM *YOUR* TERRITORY, NOT OURS! WHAT THE HELL IS HE TALKING ABOUT?
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE?*
UNDER ORDERS FROM CERBERUS, I TOOK THE FIRST STEPS HALF AN HOUR AGO --
"-- BY DISABLING STATION DEFENSES RUN FROM OMEGA CONTROL. NOTHING MUST STAND IN THE WAY OF AN ORDERLY TRANSITION.
"YOUR REMAINING DEFENDERS HAVE BEEN ELIMINATED IN ADVANCE OF OUR OCCUPYING FORCE. LET ALL FACTIONS ABOARD BE ON NOTICE --

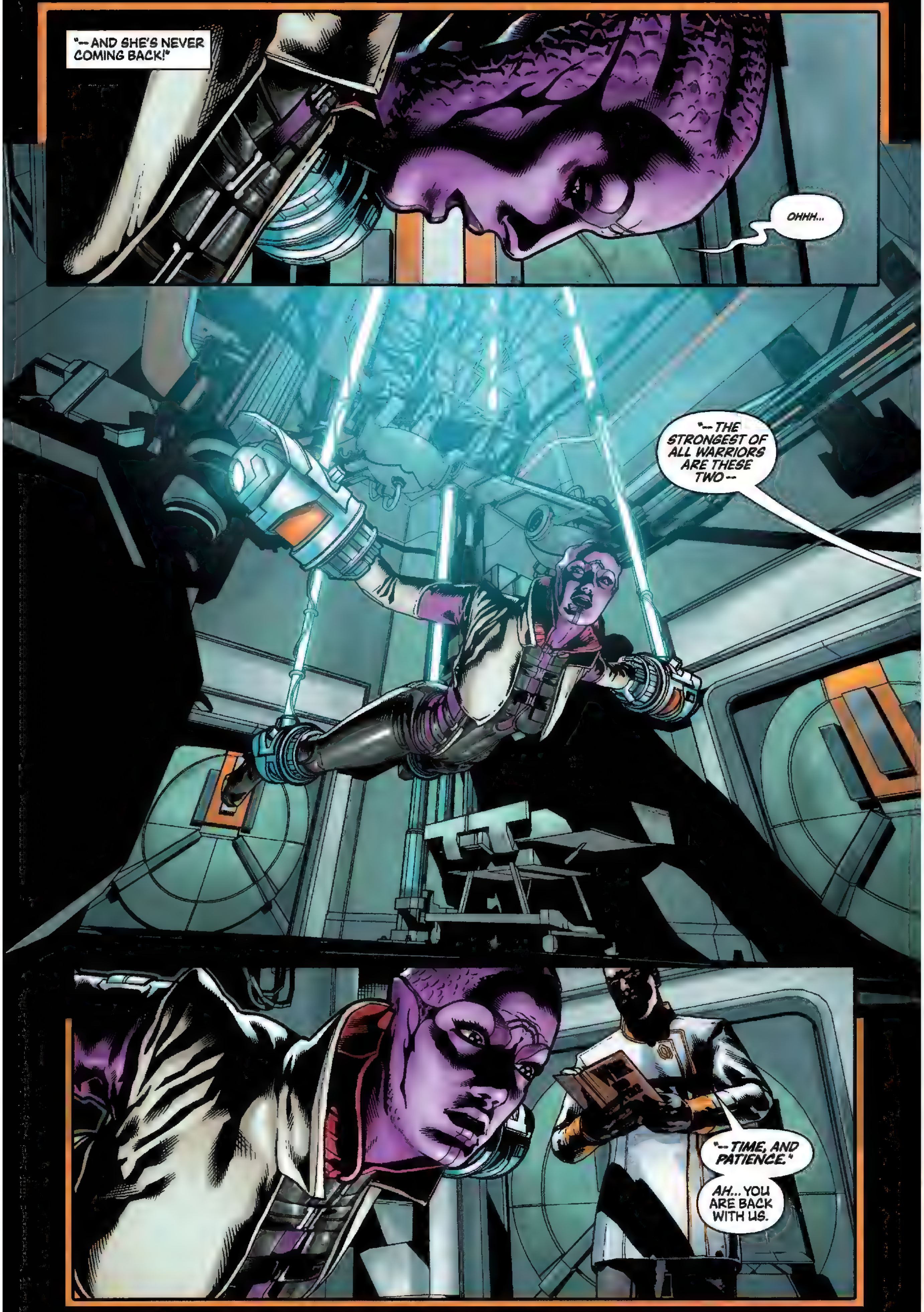

"— FROM THIS DAY FORWARD, *CERBERUS CLAIMS OMEGA!*
"SUBMIT NOW, FOR YOUR OWN PROTECTION! RESIST — AND SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES!"

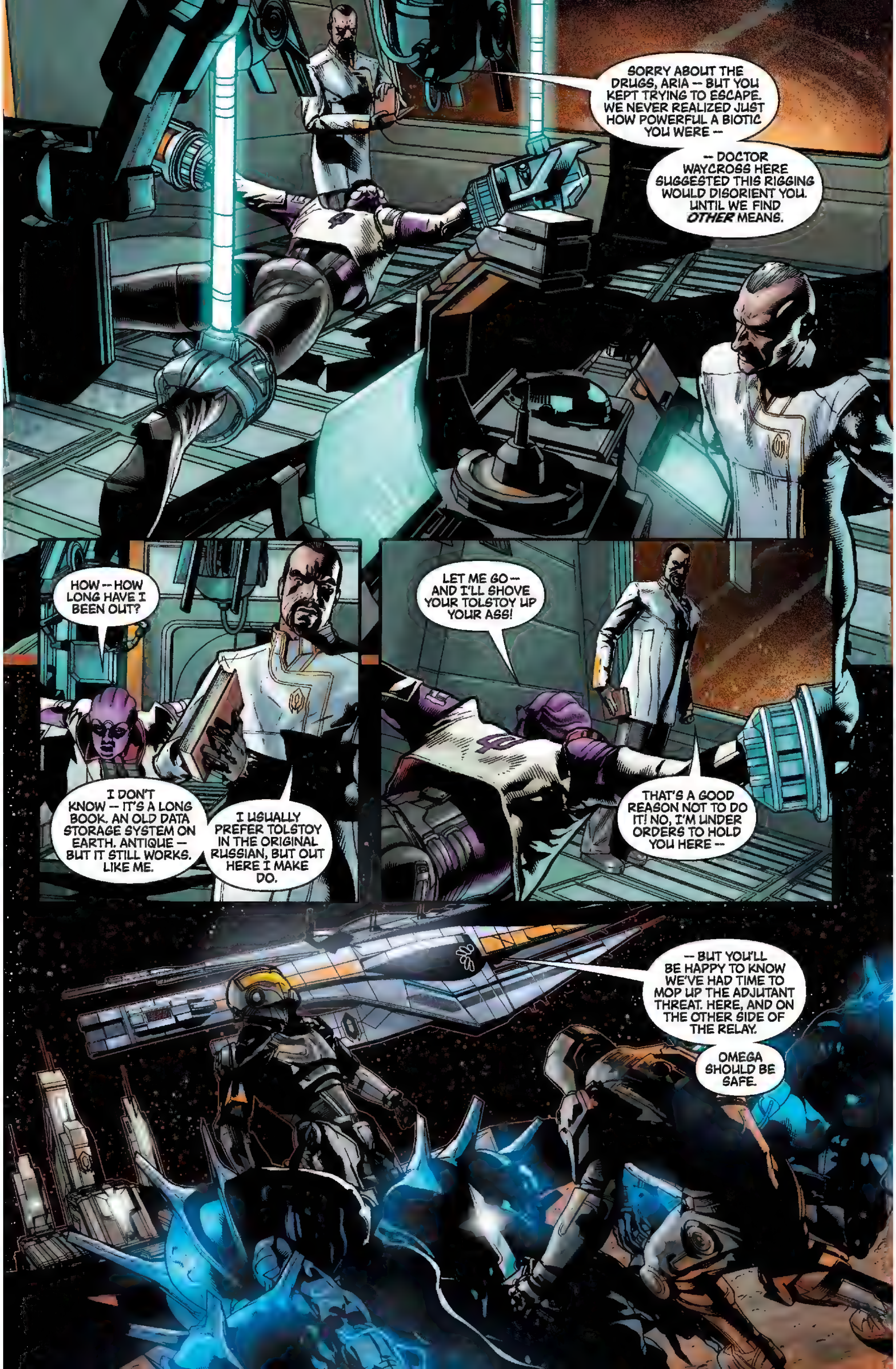

DURING CERBERUS'S EXISTENCE, THE GROUP HAD ALWAYS BEEN A CUSTOMER ON OMEGA -- NEVER A COMPETITOR TO CONTROL IT.
THE GROUP PAID WELL TO USE OMEGA AS A STAGING AREA. WHILE NEVER FULLY TRUSTING CERBERUS, ARIA T'LOAK WELCOMED THE EASY PROFITS.
IT WAS STRICTLY BUSINESS. BUT IN BUSINESS, EVERY DEAL ALSO HOLDS THE POTENTIAL FOR LOSS.
NOW, WITH ARIA AWAY FROM THE STATION, CERBERUS HAS FULLY JOINED THE BATTLE FOR OMEGA.
READY ARMS! WE'VE GOT TO SECURE LANDING BAYS FOR OUR TROOP TRANSPORTS!
AND AS COLONEL ASHE AND HIS CERBERUS FORCES ARE ABOUT TO FIND --

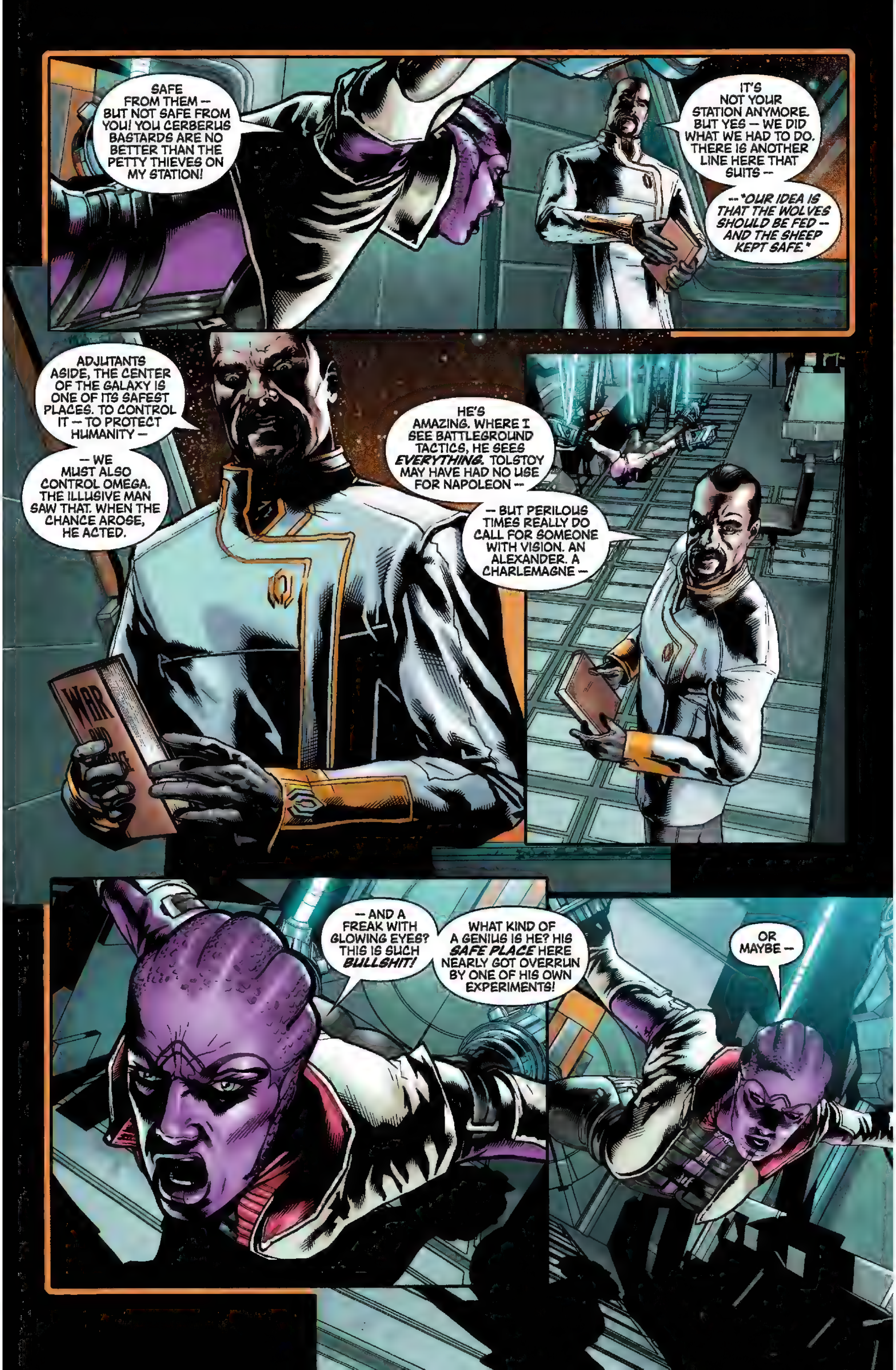

-- THEY'RE NOT THE ONLY ONES WHO'VE SEIZED AN OPPORTUNITY...
WHAT THE HELL *IS* ALL THIS?

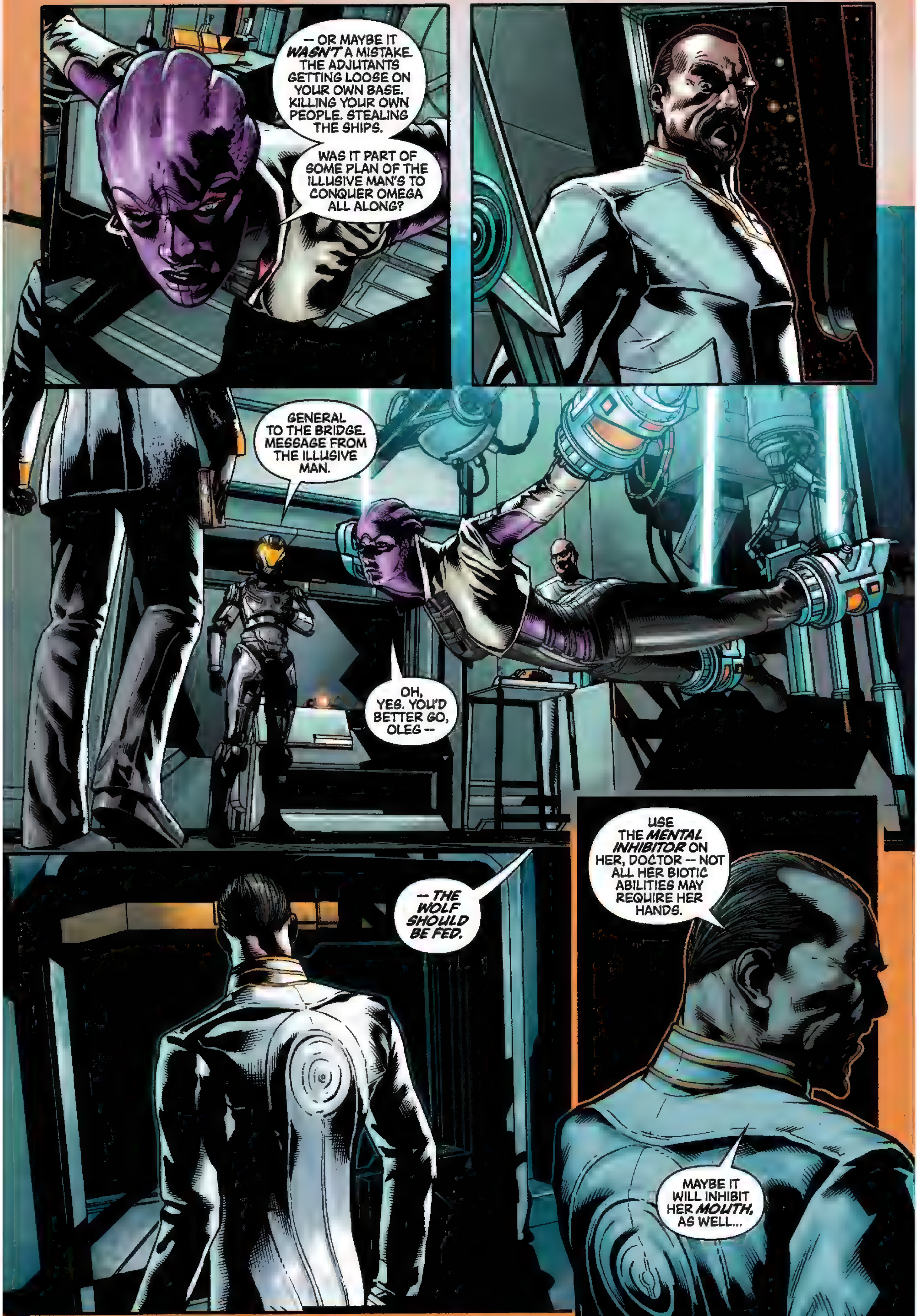

YOU! *FREAK!*
WHAT'S GOING ON?
WHAT DO YOU THINK IS GOING ON? HAVEN'T YOU HEARD? *ARIA IS GONE!*
SOME OF OUR BLUE SUNS GOT PUSHED INTO BLOOD PACK TERRITORY WHEN THOSE REAPER THINGS ATTACKED --
"-- AND BLOOD PACK PUSHED BACK. NORMALLY, ARIA SETTLES THESE PROBLEMS -- BUT SHE'S GONE!
"RUMORS ARE FLYING ABOUT WHY, BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER! EVERYONE'S MAKING THEIR PLAY FOR CONTROL!"
WHAT ABOUT *US?* DIDN'T YOU HEAR MY ANNOUNCEMENT?
CERBERUS? EVERYBODY THINKS YOU GUYS ARE JUST HERE TO MOP UP THE REAPER MESS. I MEAN, SERIOUSLY --
-- WHAT WOULD CERBERUS WANT WITH OMEGA?

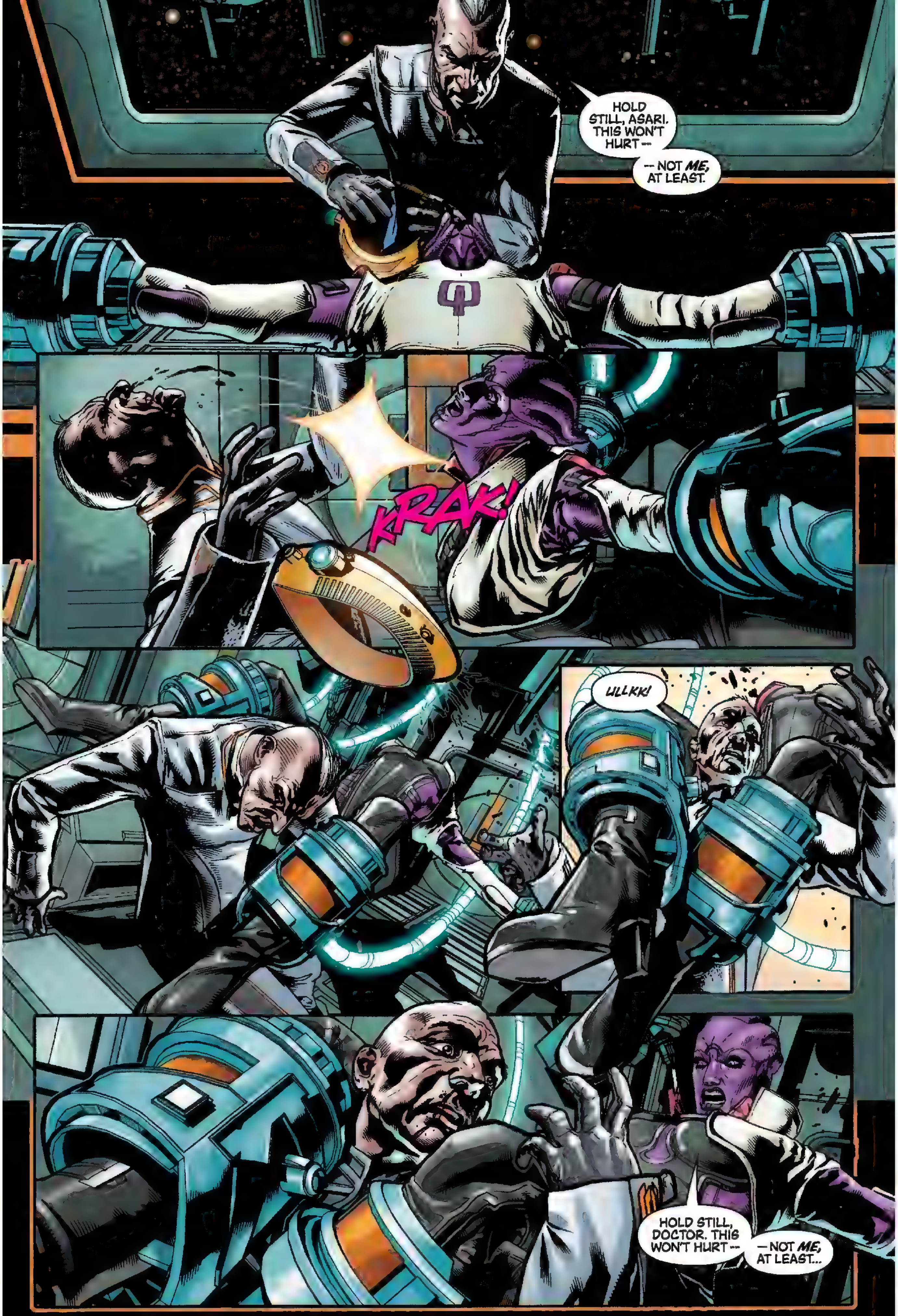

IT'S ALMOST COLLECTIVE DENIAL, COLONEL.
DENIAL -- OR *STUPIDITY.* IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER WHICH --
-- THEY'LL SEE SOON ENOUGH. THE ILLUSIVE MAN FIGURED WE'D HAVE A SHORT WINDOW TO ACT, BEFORE ANY RESISTANCE ORGANIZED.
LOOKS LIKE THE WINDOW WILL BE OPEN A LITTLE LONGER.
ARIA IS THE ONLY PERSON CAPABLE OF LEADING THE TRASH ON THIS STATION AGAINST US --

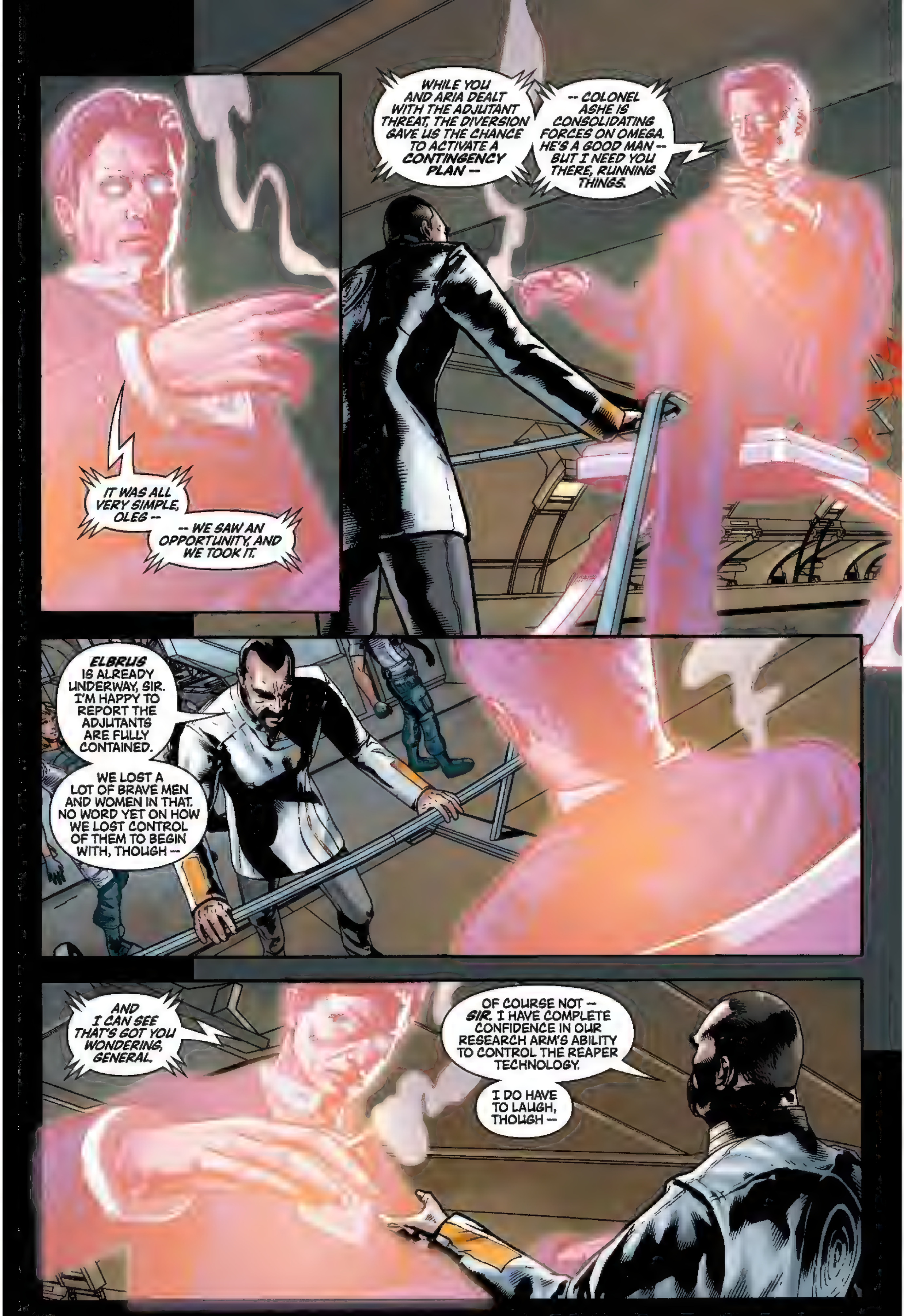

"--AND SHE'S NEVER COMING BACK!"
OHHH...
"--THE STRONGEST OF ALL WARRIORS ARE THESE TWO--"
"--TIME, AND PATIENCE."
AH... YOU ARE BACK WITH US.

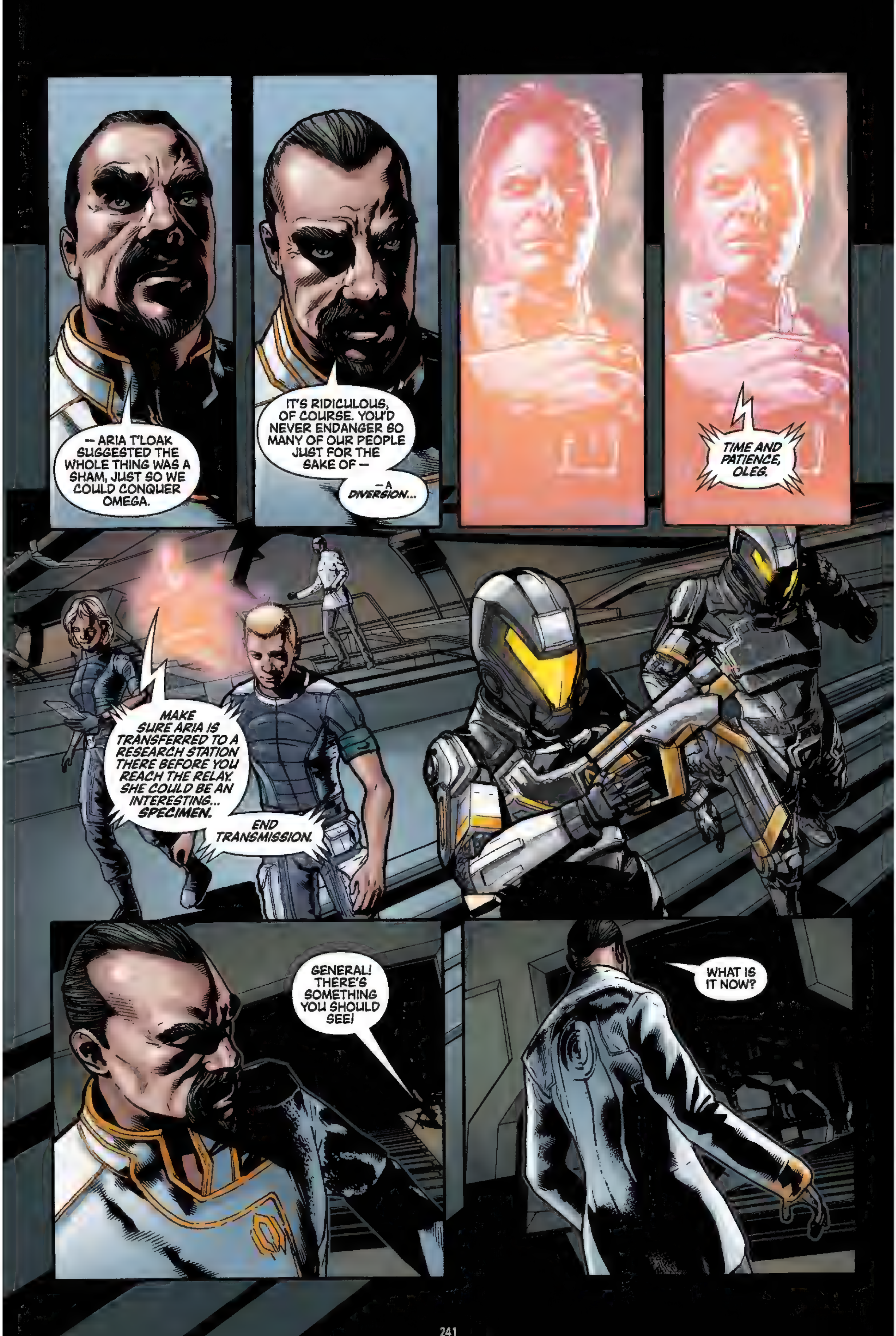

SORRY ABOUT THE DRUGS, ARIA -- BUT YOU KEPT TRYING TO ESCAPE. WE NEVER REALIZED JUST HOW POWERFUL A BIOTIC YOU WERE --
-- DOCTOR WAYCROSS HERE SUGGESTED THIS RIGGING WOULD DISORIENT YOU. UNTIL WE FIND *OTHER* MEANS.
HOW -- HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN OUT?
I DON'T KNOW -- IT'S A LONG BOOK. AN OLD DATA STORAGE SYSTEM ON EARTH. ANTIQUE -- BUT IT STILL WORKS. LIKE ME.
I USUALLY PREFER TOLSTOY IN THE ORIGINAL RUSSIAN, BUT OUT HERE I MAKE DO.
LET ME GO -- AND I'LL SHOVE YOUR TOLSTOY UP YOUR ASS!
THAT'S A GOOD REASON NOT TO DO IT! NO, I'M UNDER ORDERS TO HOLD YOU HERE --
-- BUT YOU'LL BE HAPPY TO KNOW WE'VE HAD TIME TO MOP UP THE ADJUTANT THREAT. HERE, AND ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RELAY.
OMEGA SHOULD BE SAFE.

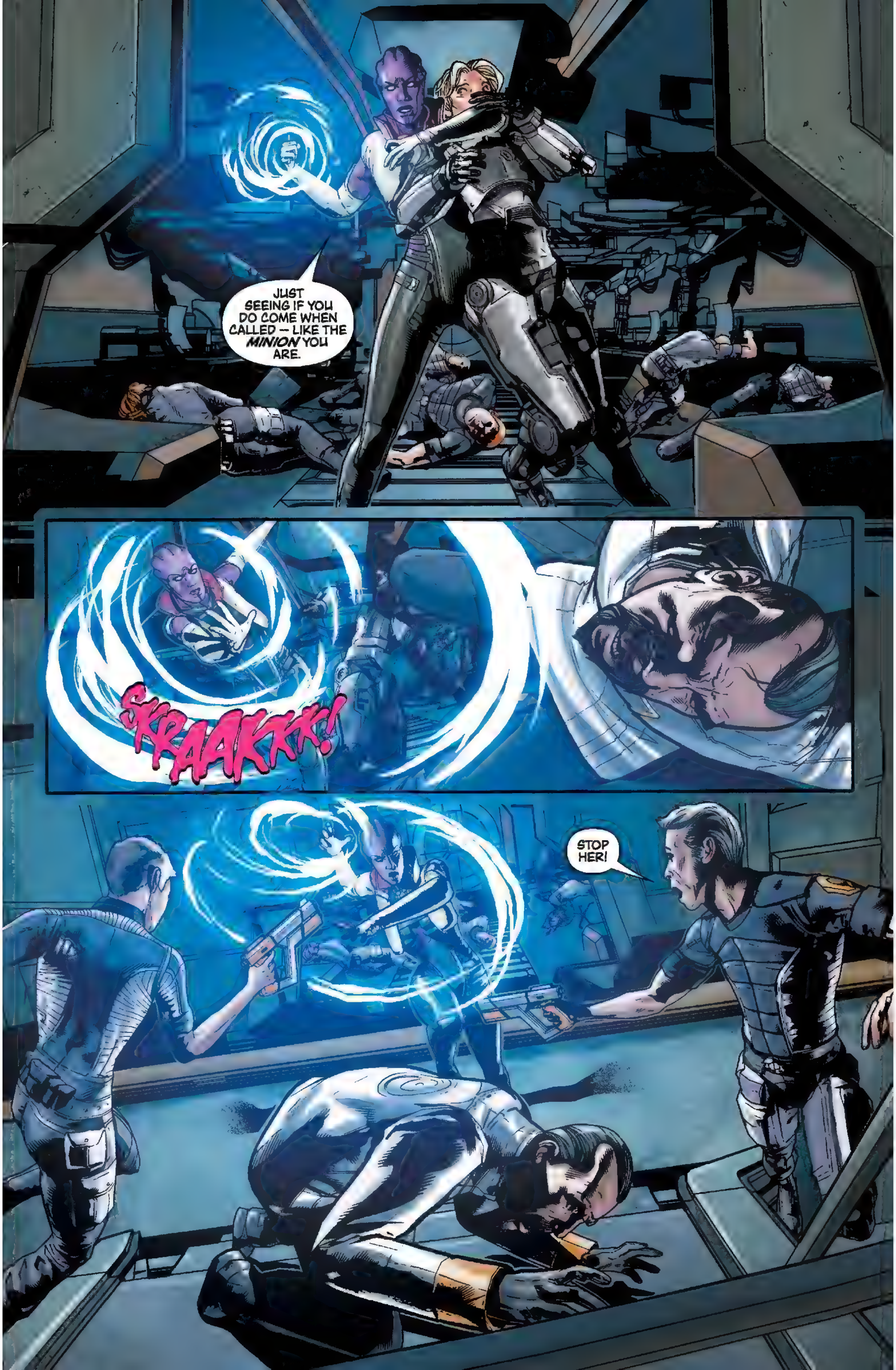

SAFE FROM THEM -- BUT NOT SAFE FROM YOU! YOU CERBERUS BASTARDS ARE NO BETTER THAN THE PETTY THIEVES ON MY STATION!
IT'S NOT YOUR STATION ANYMORE. BUT YES -- WE DID WHAT WE HAD TO DO. THERE IS ANOTHER LINE HERE THAT SUITS --
-- *"OUR IDEA IS THAT THE WOLVES SHOULD BE FED -- AND THE SHEEP KEPT SAFE."*
ADJUTANTS ASIDE, THE CENTER OF THE GALAXY IS ONE OF ITS SAFEST PLACES. TO CONTROL IT -- TO PROTECT HUMANITY --
-- WE MUST ALSO CONTROL OMEGA. THE ILLUSIVE MAN SAW THAT. WHEN THE CHANCE AROSE, HE ACTED.
WAR AND PEACE
HE'S AMAZING. WHERE I SEE BATTLEGROUND TACTICS, HE SEES *EVERYTHING.* TOLSTOY MAY HAVE HAD NO USE FOR NAPOLEON --
-- BUT PERILOUS TIMES REALLY DO CALL FOR SOMEONE WITH VISION. AN ALEXANDER. A CHARLEMAGNE --
-- AND A FREAK WITH GLOWING EYES? THIS IS SUCH *BULLSHIT!*
WHAT KIND OF A GENIUS IS HE? HIS *SAFE PLACE* HERE NEARLY GOT OVERRUN BY ONE OF HIS OWN EXPERIMENTS!
OR MAYBE --

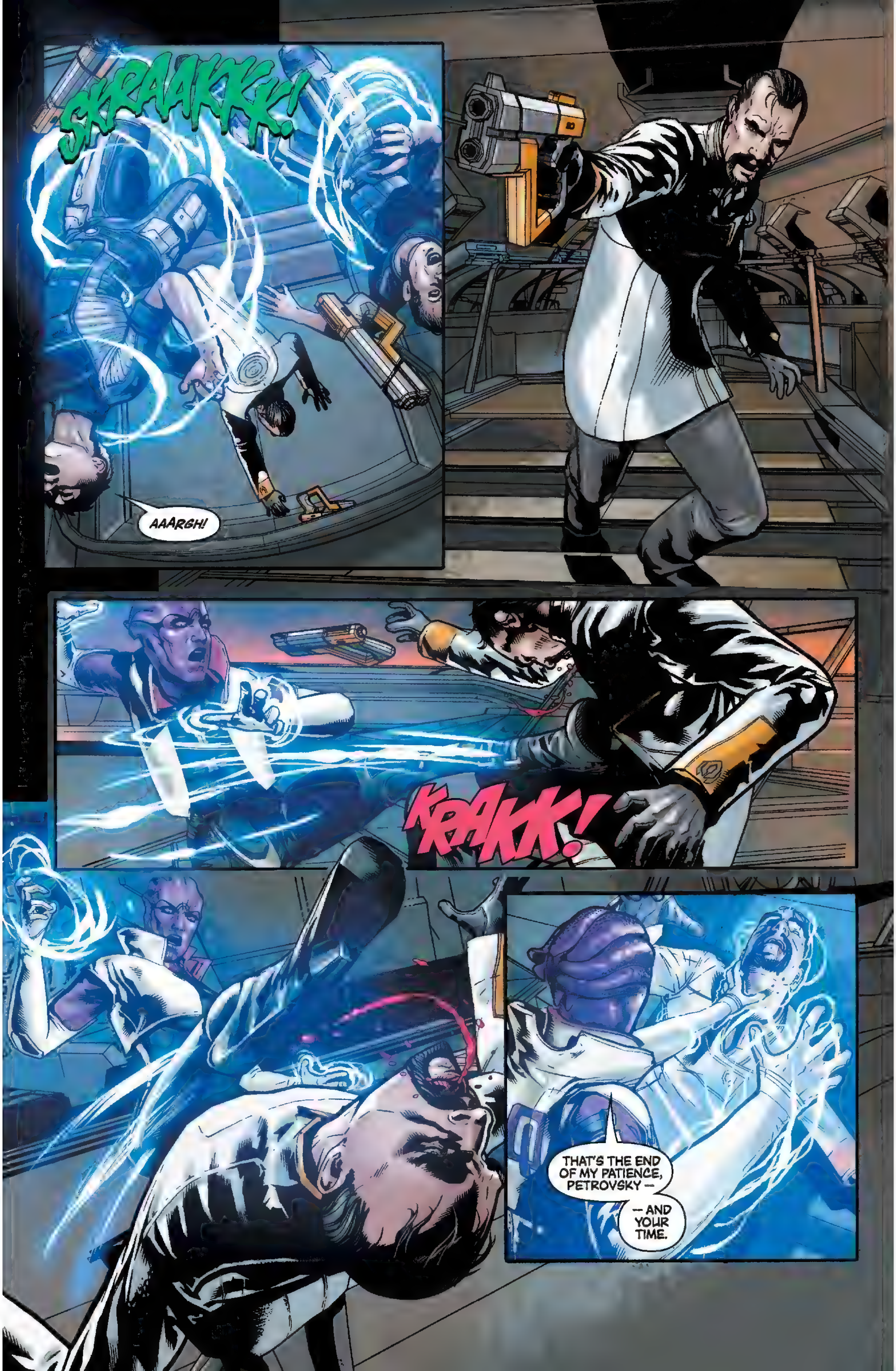

-- OR MAYBE IT *WASN'T* A MISTAKE. THE ADJUTANTS GETTING LOOSE ON YOUR OWN BASE. KILLING YOUR OWN PEOPLE. STEALING THE SHIPS.
WAS IT PART OF SOME PLAN OF THE ILLUSIVE MAN'S TO CONQUER OMEGA ALL ALONG?
GENERAL TO THE BRIDGE. MESSAGE FROM THE ILLUSIVE MAN.
OH, YES. YOU'D BETTER GO, OLEG --
-- *THE WOLF SHOULD BE FED.*
USE THE *MENTAL INHIBITOR* ON HER, DOCTOR -- NOT ALL HER BIOTIC ABILITIES MAY REQUIRE HER HANDS.
MAYBE IT WILL INHIBIT HER *MOUTH,* AS WELL...

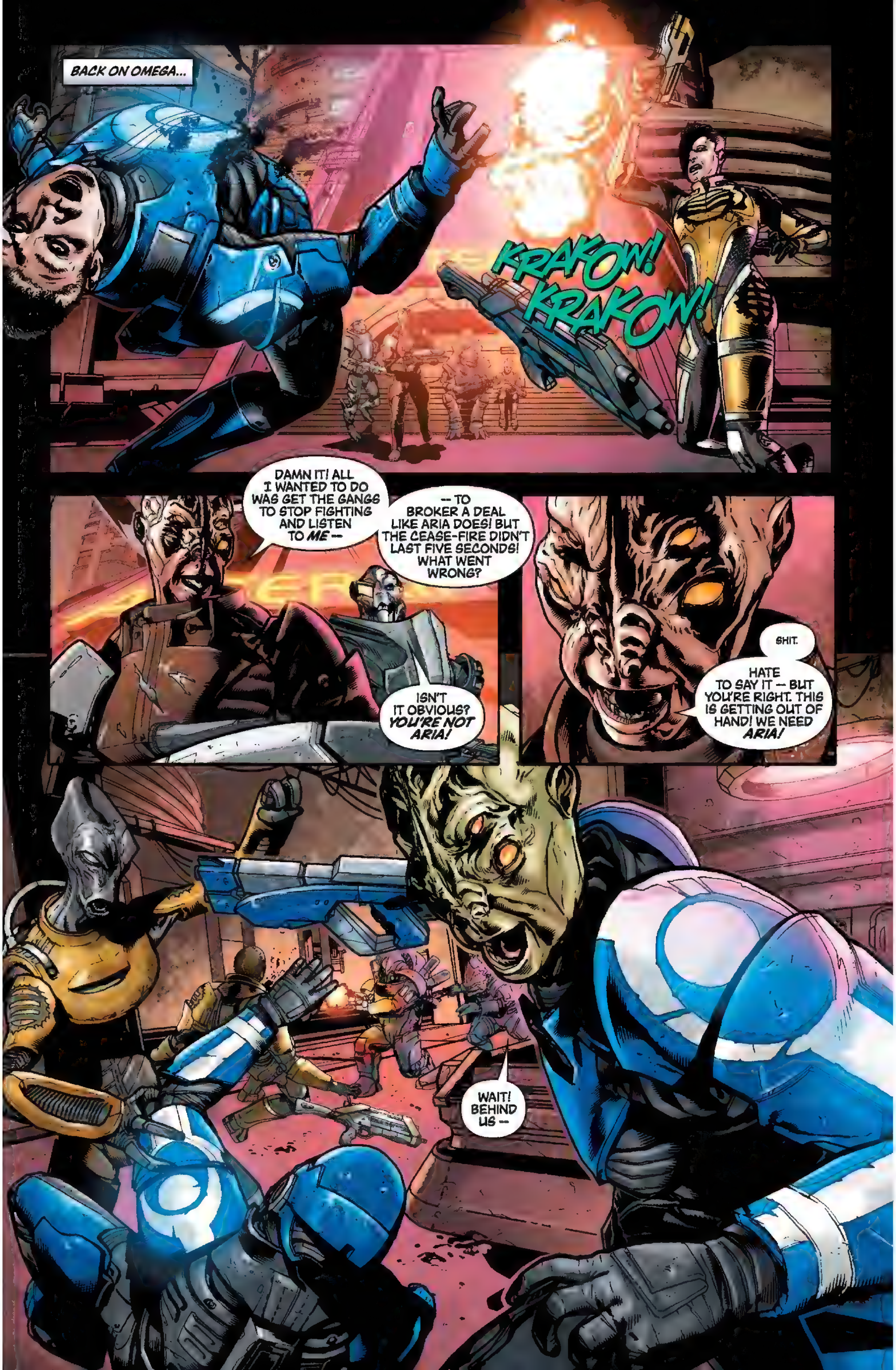

HOLD STILL, ASARI. THIS WON'T HURT --
-- NOT *ME*, AT LEAST.
KRAK!
ULLKK!
HOLD STILL, DOCTOR. THIS WON'T HURT --
-- NOT *ME*, AT LEAST...

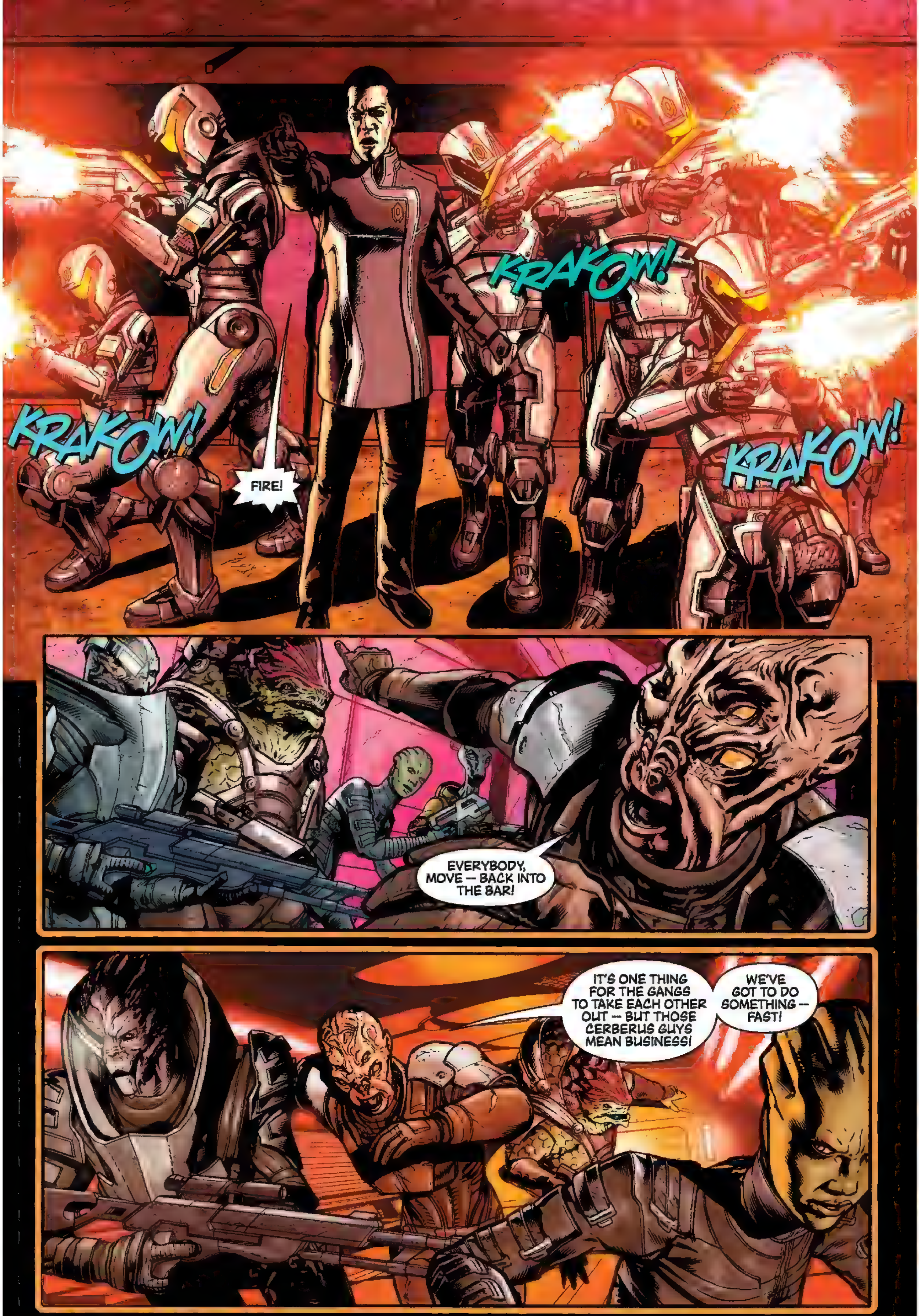

IT WAS ALL VERY SIMPLE, OLEG --
-- WE SAW AN OPPORTUNITY, AND WE TOOK IT.
WHILE YOU AND ARIA DEALT WITH THE ADJUTANT THREAT, THE DIVERSION GAVE US THE CHANCE TO ACTIVATE A **CONTINGENCY PLAN** --
-- COLONEL ASHE IS CONSOLIDATING FORCES ON OMEGA. HE'S A GOOD MAN -- BUT I NEED YOU THERE, RUNNING THINGS.
ELBRUS IS ALREADY UNDERWAY, SIR. I'M HAPPY TO REPORT THE ADJUTANTS ARE FULLY CONTAINED.
WE LOST A LOT OF BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN IN THAT. NO WORD YET ON HOW WE LOST CONTROL OF THEM TO BEGIN WITH, THOUGH --
AND I CAN SEE THAT'S GOT YOU WONDERING, GENERAL.
OF COURSE NOT -- ***SIR.*** I HAVE COMPLETE CONFIDENCE IN OUR RESEARCH ARM'S ABILITY TO CONTROL THE REAPER TECHNOLOGY.
I DO HAVE TO LAUGH, THOUGH --

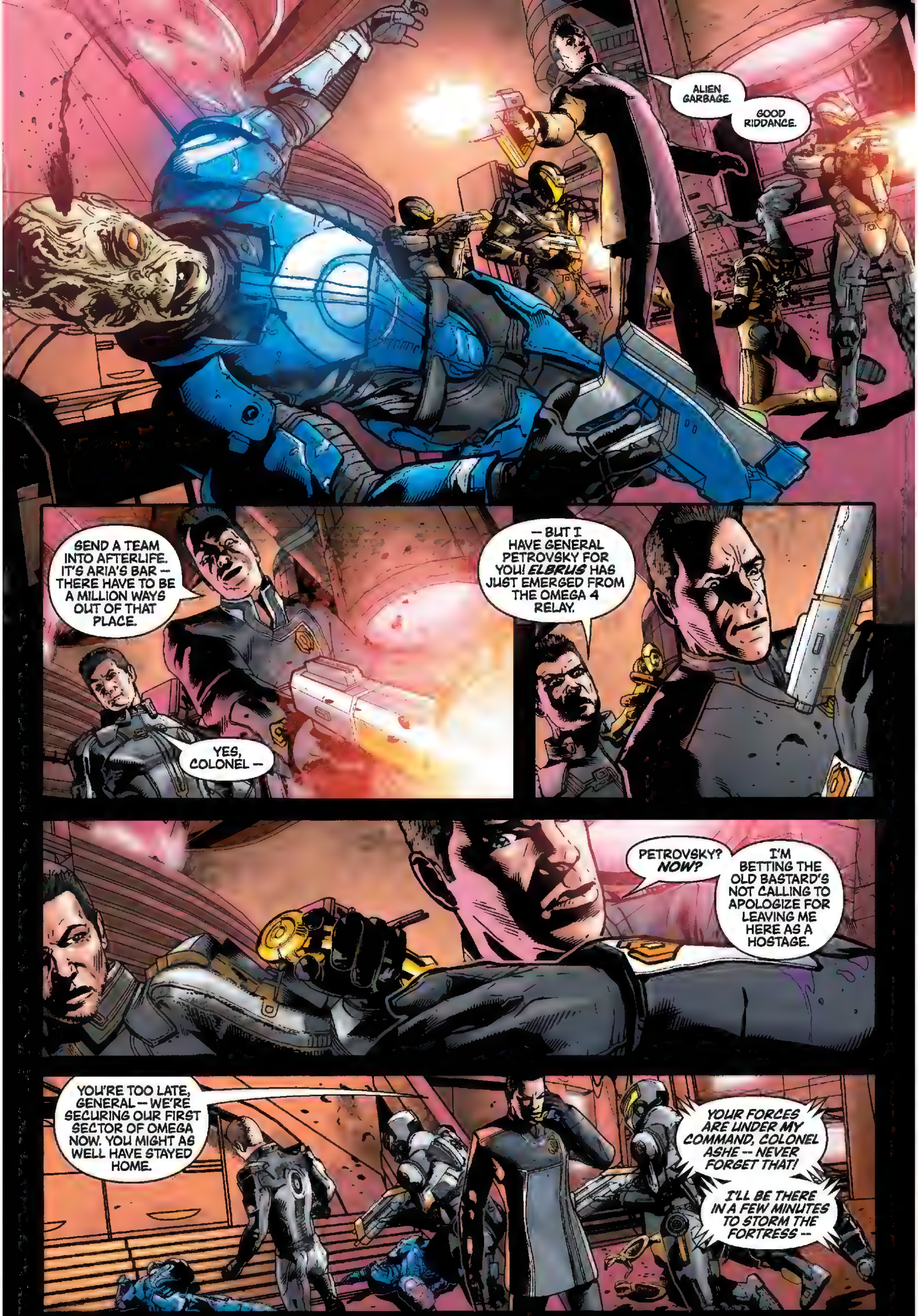

-- ARIA T'LOAK SUGGESTED THE WHOLE THING WAS A SHAM, JUST SO WE COULD CONQUER OMEGA.
IT'S RIDICULOUS, OF COURSE. YOU'D NEVER ENDANGER SO MANY OF OUR PEOPLE JUST FOR THE SAKE OF --
-- A *DIVERSION*...
TIME AND PATIENCE, OLEG.
*MAKE SURE ARIA IS TRANSFERRED TO A RESEARCH STATION THERE BEFORE YOU REACH THE RELAY. SHE COULD BE AN INTERESTING... **SPECIMEN.***
END TRANSMISSION.
GENERAL! THERE'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD SEE!
WHAT IS IT NOW?

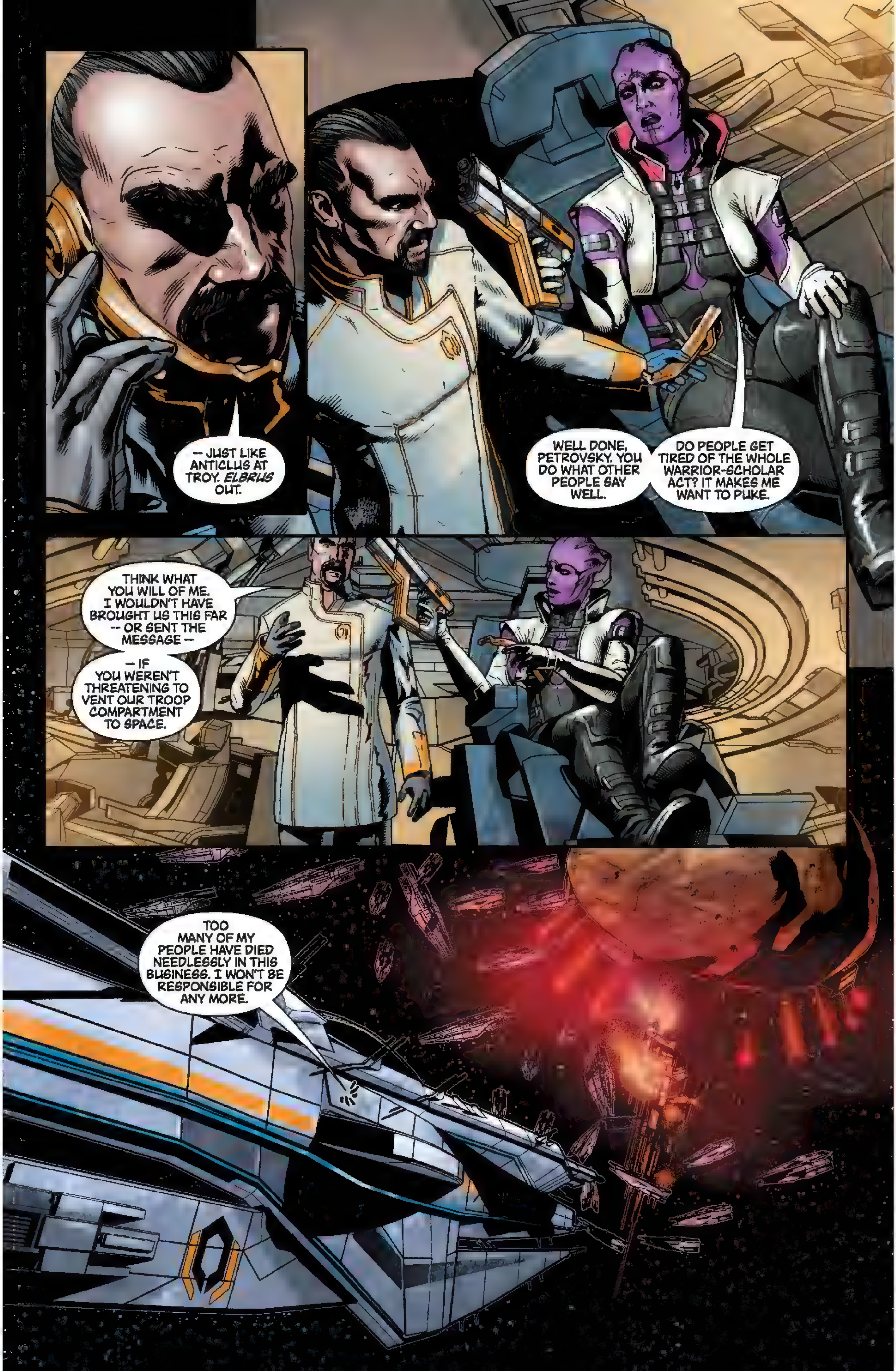

JUST SEEING IF YOU DO COME WHEN CALLED -- LIKE THE *MINION* YOU ARE.
SKRAAKKK!
STOP HER!

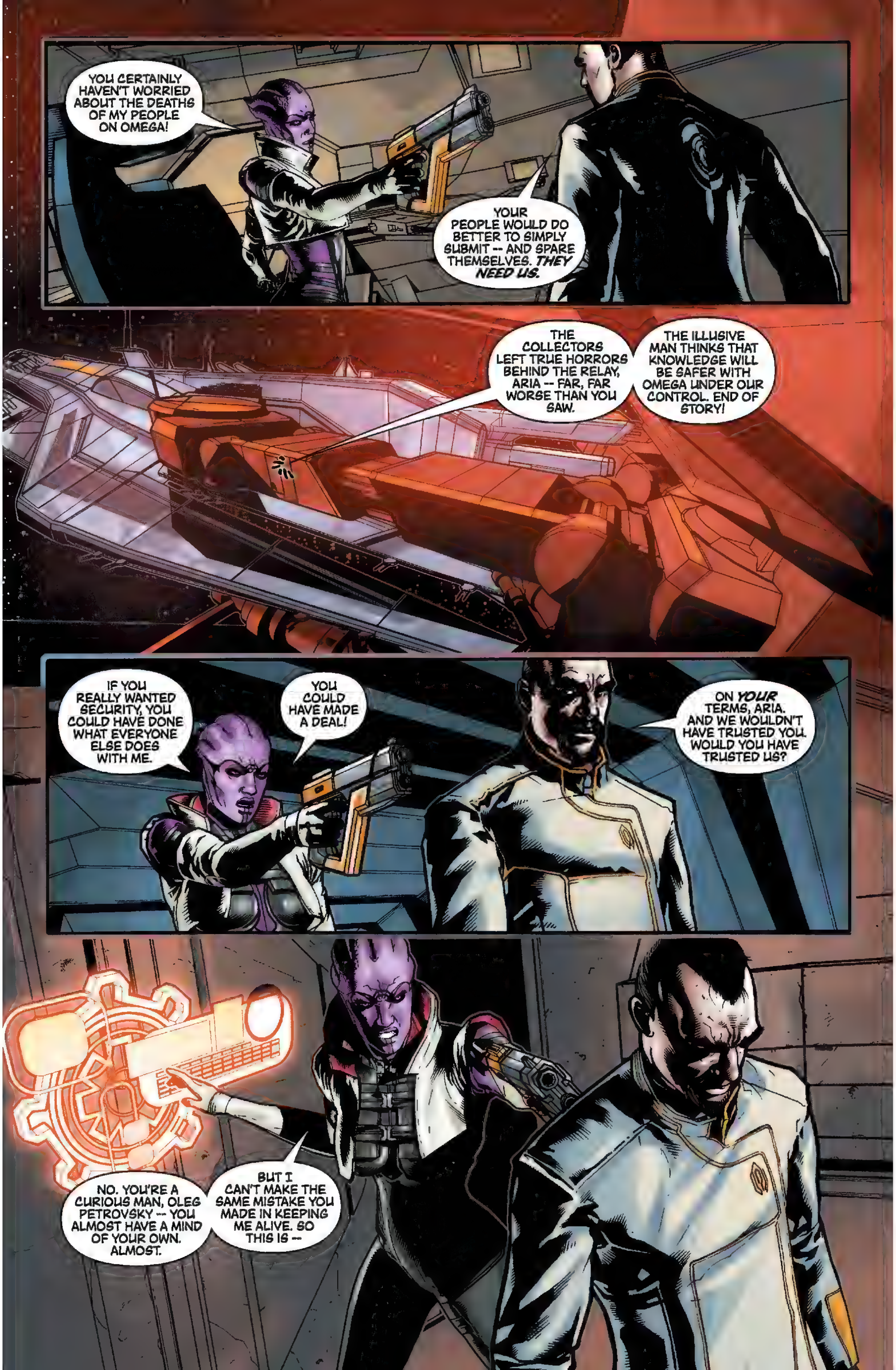

SKRAAKKK!
AAARGH!
KRAKK!
THAT'S THE END OF MY PATIENCE, PETROVSKY —
— AND YOUR TIME.

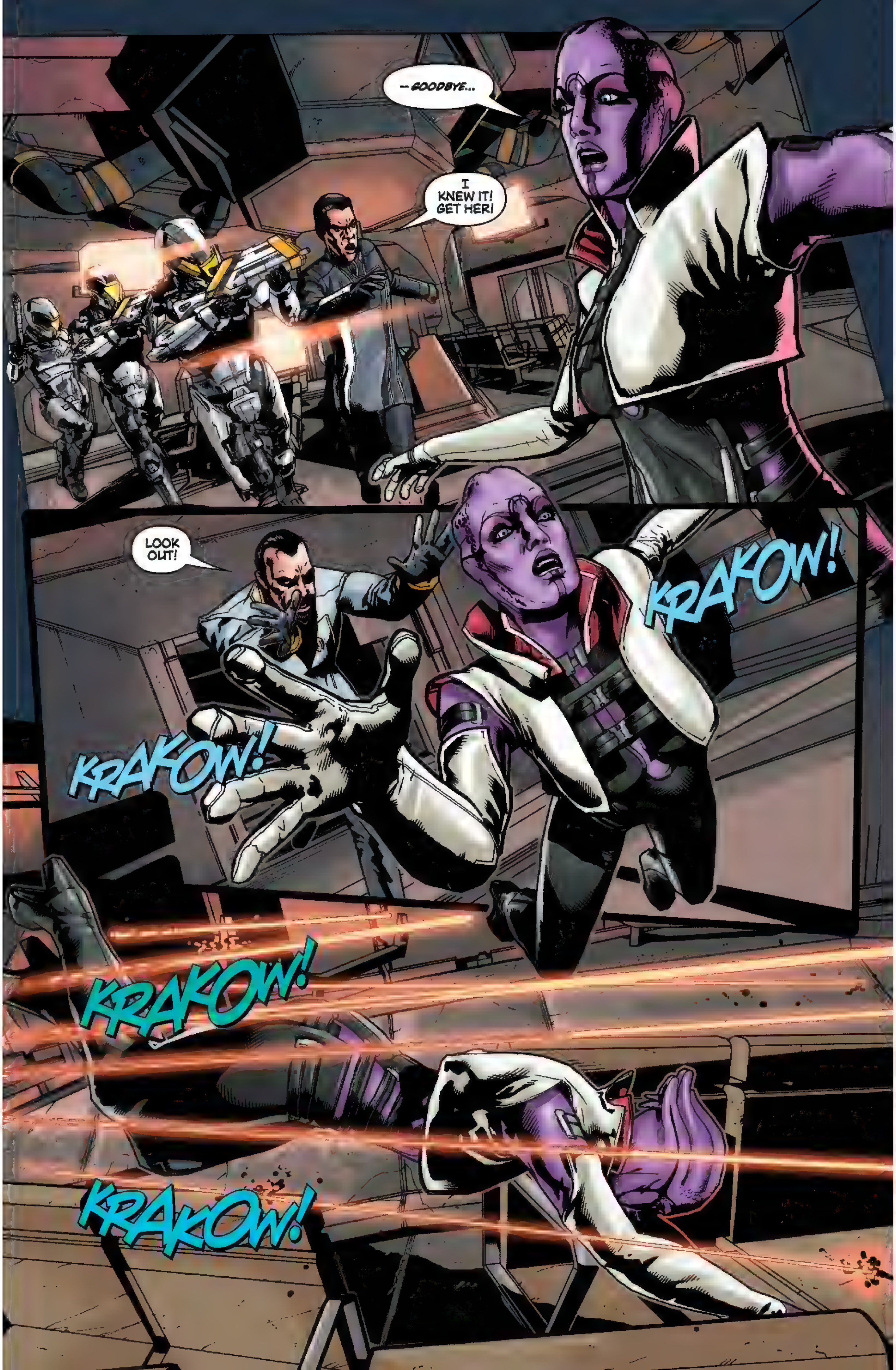

BACK ON OMEGA...
KRAKOW! KRAKOW!
DAMN IT! ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS GET THE GANGS TO STOP FIGHTING AND LISTEN TO *ME* --
-- TO BROKER A DEAL LIKE ARIA DOES! BUT THE CEASE-FIRE DIDN'T LAST FIVE SECONDS! WHAT WENT WRONG?
ISN'T IT OBVIOUS? *YOU'RE NOT ARIA!*
SHIT.
HATE TO SAY IT -- BUT YOU'RE RIGHT. THIS IS GETTING OUT OF HAND! WE NEED *ARIA!*
WAIT! BEHIND US --

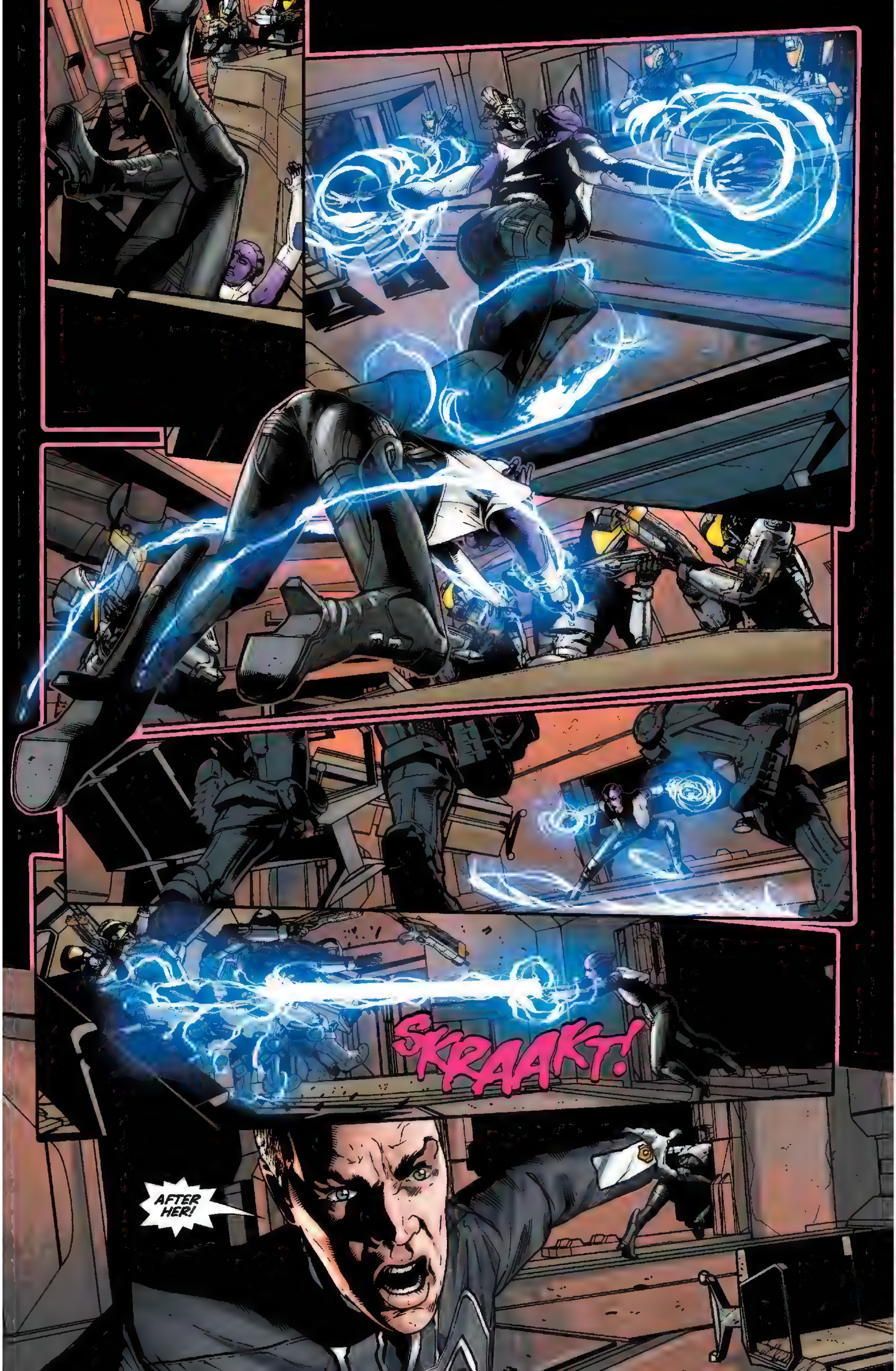

KRAKOW!
FIRE!
KRAKOW!
KRAKOW!
EVERYBODY, MOVE -- BACK INTO THE BAR!
IT'S ONE THING FOR THE GANGS TO TAKE EACH OTHER OUT -- BUT THOSE CERBERUS GUYS MEAN BUSINESS!
WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING -- FAST!

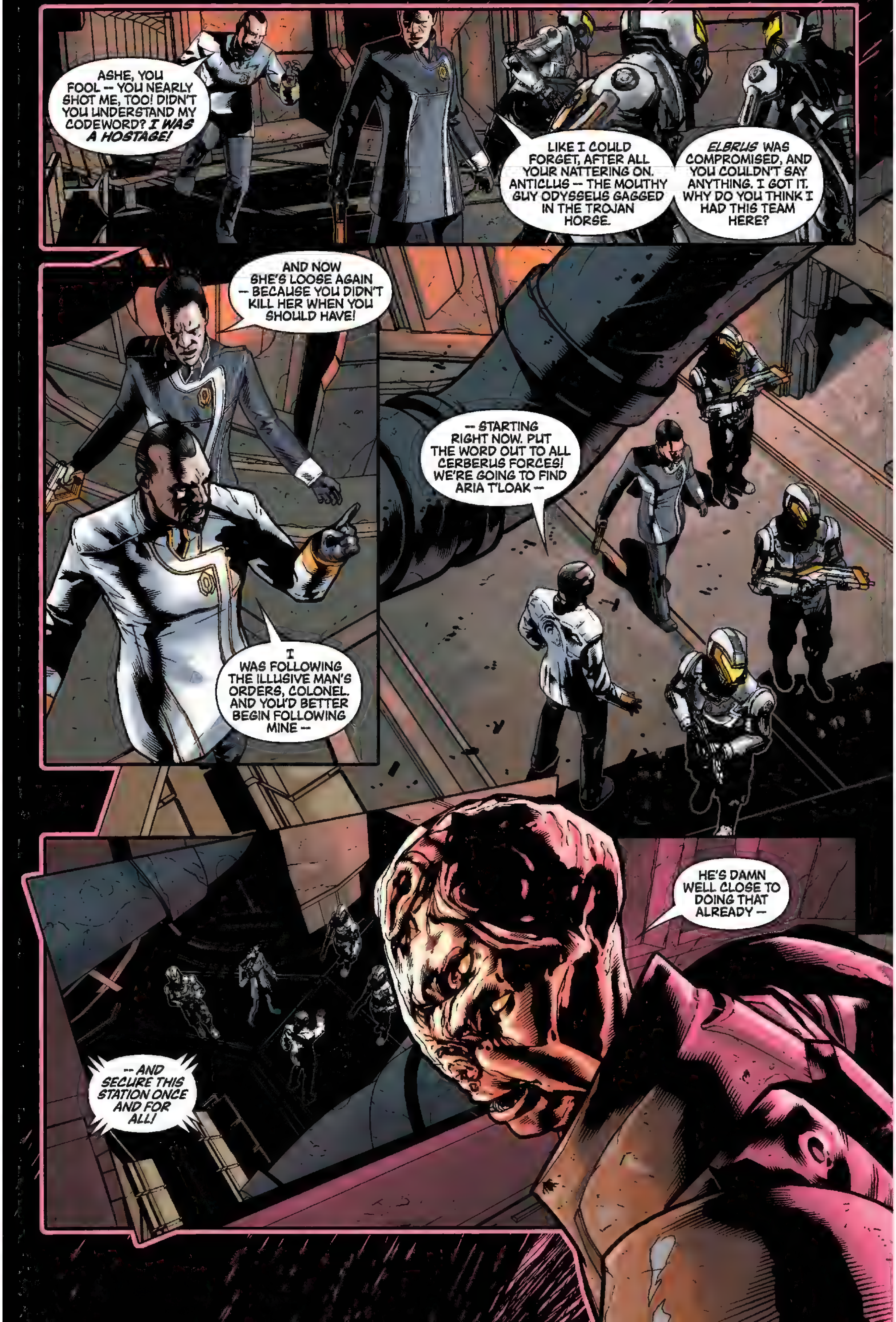

ALIEN GARBAGE.
GOOD RIDDANCE.
SEND A TEAM INTO AFTERLIFE. IT'S ARIA'S BAR -- THERE HAVE TO BE A MILLION WAYS OUT OF THAT PLACE.
YES, COLONEL --
-- BUT I HAVE GENERAL PETROVSKY FOR YOU! *ELBRUS* HAS JUST EMERGED FROM THE OMEGA 4 RELAY.
PETROVSKY? *NOW?*
I'M BETTING THE OLD BASTARD'S NOT CALLING TO APOLOGIZE FOR LEAVING ME HERE AS A HOSTAGE.
YOU'RE TOO LATE, GENERAL -- WE'RE SECURING OUR FIRST SECTOR OF OMEGA NOW. YOU MIGHT AS WELL HAVE STAYED HOME.
YOUR FORCES ARE UNDER MY COMMAND, COLONEL ASHE -- NEVER FORGET THAT!
I'LL BE THERE IN A FEW MINUTES TO STORM THE FORTRESS --

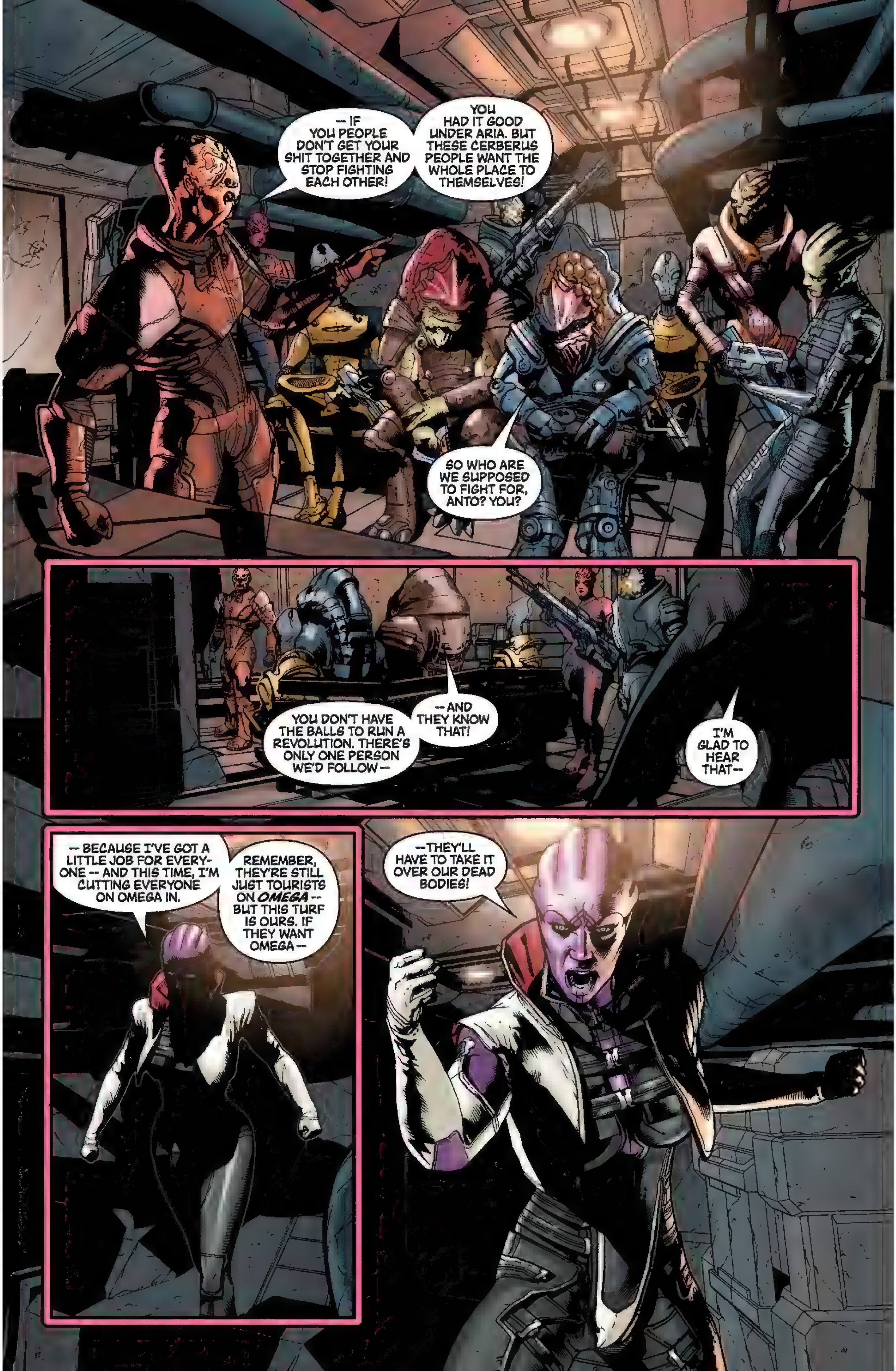

-- JUST LIKE ANTICLUS AT TROY. *ELBRUS* OUT.
WELL DONE, PETROVSKY. YOU DO WHAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY WELL.
DO PEOPLE GET TIRED OF THE WHOLE WARRIOR-SCHOLAR ACT? IT MAKES ME WANT TO PUKE.
THINK WHAT YOU WILL OF ME. I WOULDN'T HAVE BROUGHT US THIS FAR -- OR SENT THE MESSAGE --
-- IF YOU WEREN'T THREATENING TO VENT OUR TROOP COMPARTMENT TO SPACE.
TOO MANY OF MY PEOPLE HAVE DIED NEEDLESSLY IN THIS BUSINESS. I WON'T BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY MORE.

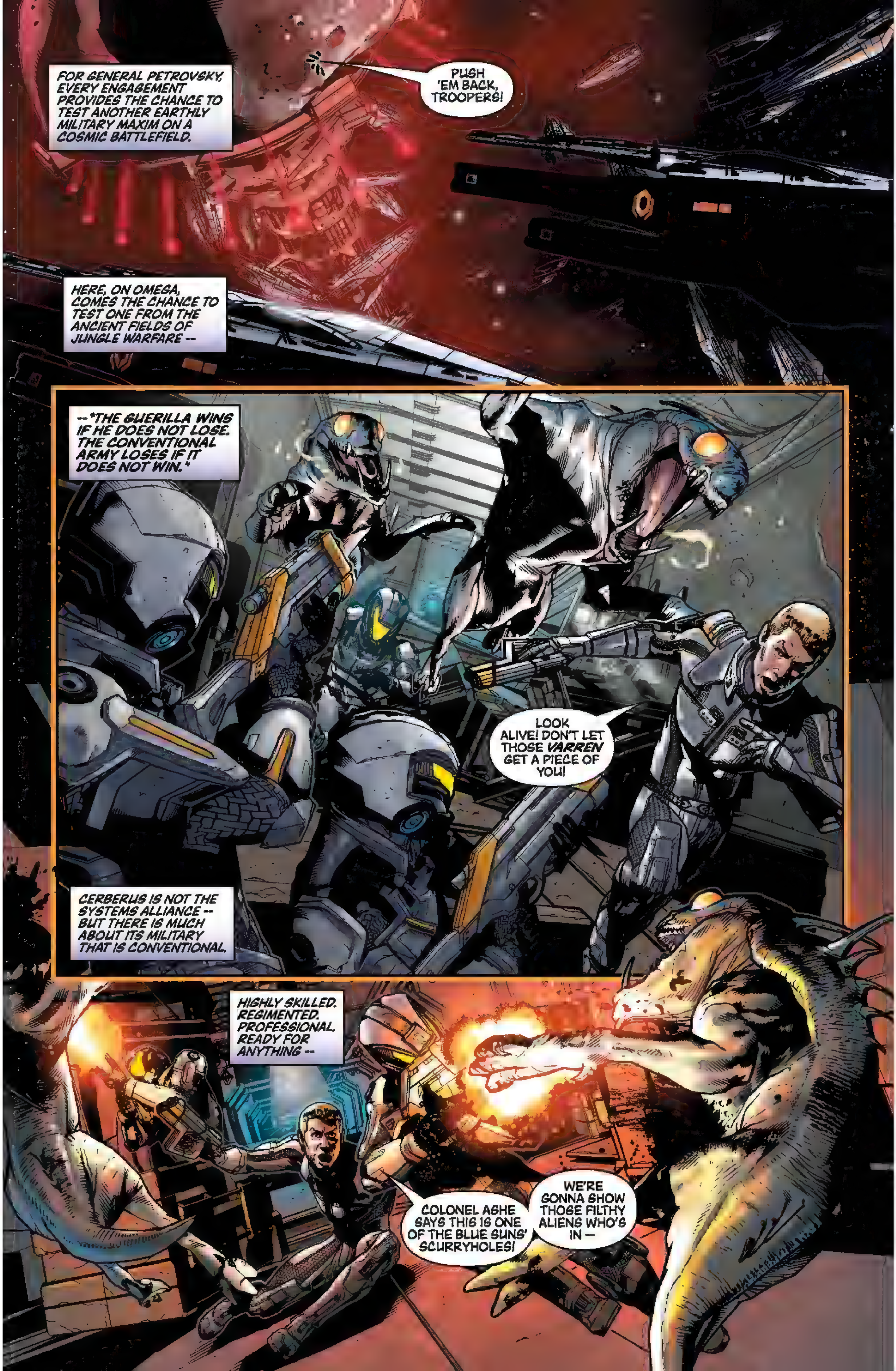

YOU CERTAINLY HAVEN'T WORRIED ABOUT THE DEATHS OF MY PEOPLE ON OMEGA!
YOUR PEOPLE WOULD DO BETTER TO SIMPLY SUBMIT -- AND SPARE THEMSELVES. *THEY NEED US.*
THE COLLECTORS LEFT TRUE HORRORS BEHIND THE RELAY, ARIA -- FAR, FAR WORSE THAN YOU SAW.
THE ILLUSIVE MAN THINKS THAT KNOWLEDGE WILL BE SAFER WITH OMEGA UNDER OUR CONTROL. END OF STORY!
IF YOU REALLY WANTED SECURITY, YOU COULD HAVE DONE WHAT EVERYONE ELSE DOES WITH ME.
YOU COULD HAVE MADE A DEAL!
ON *YOUR* TERMS, ARIA. AND WE WOULDN'T HAVE TRUSTED YOU. WOULD YOU HAVE TRUSTED US?
NO. YOU'RE A CURIOUS MAN, OLEG PETROVSKY -- YOU ALMOST HAVE A MIND OF YOUR OWN. ALMOST.
BUT I CAN'T MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE YOU MADE IN KEEPING ME ALIVE. SO THIS IS --

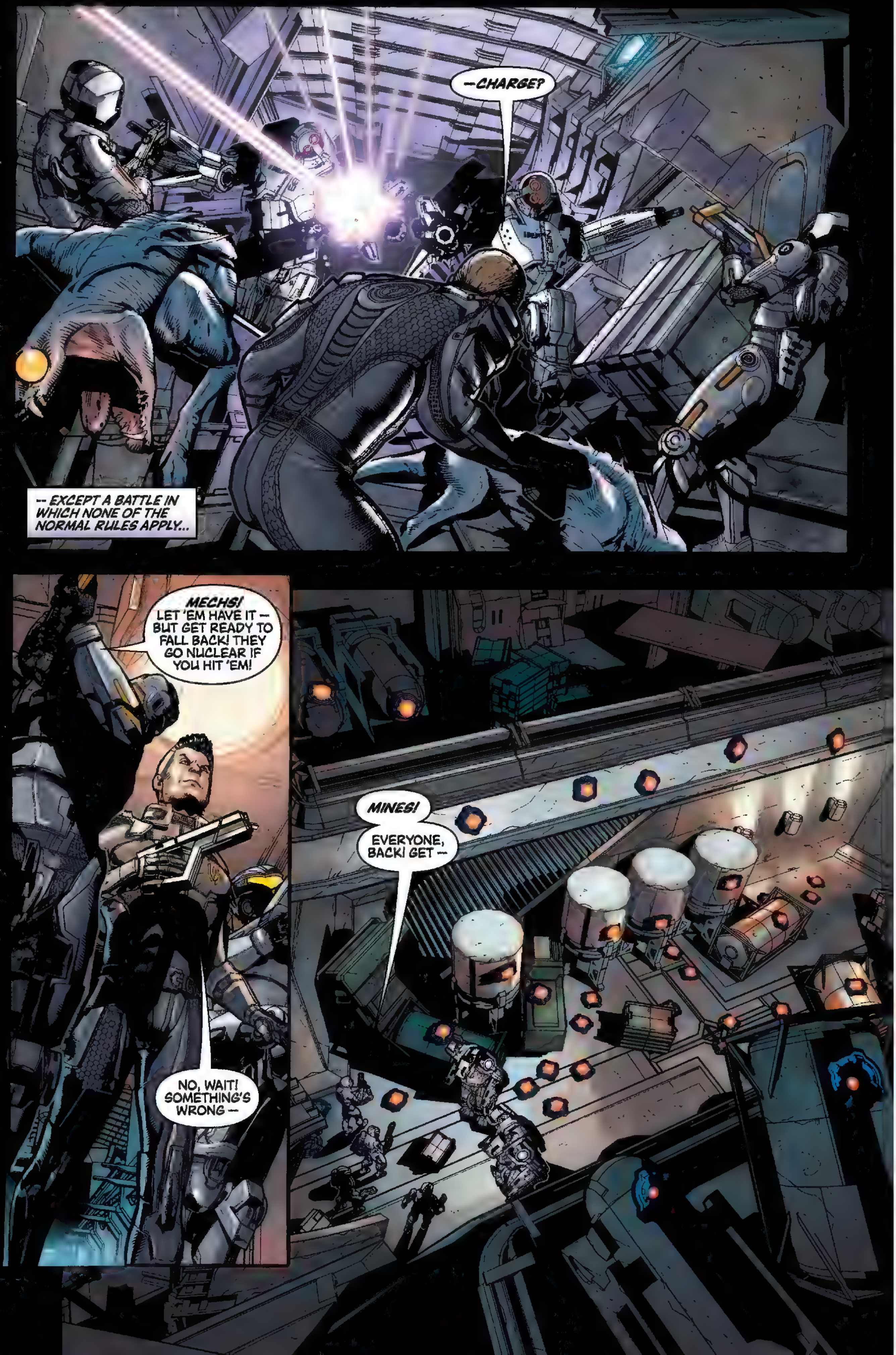

--GOODBYE...
I KNEW IT! GET HER!
LOOK OUT!
KRAKOW!
KRAKOW!
KRAKOW!
KRAKOW!

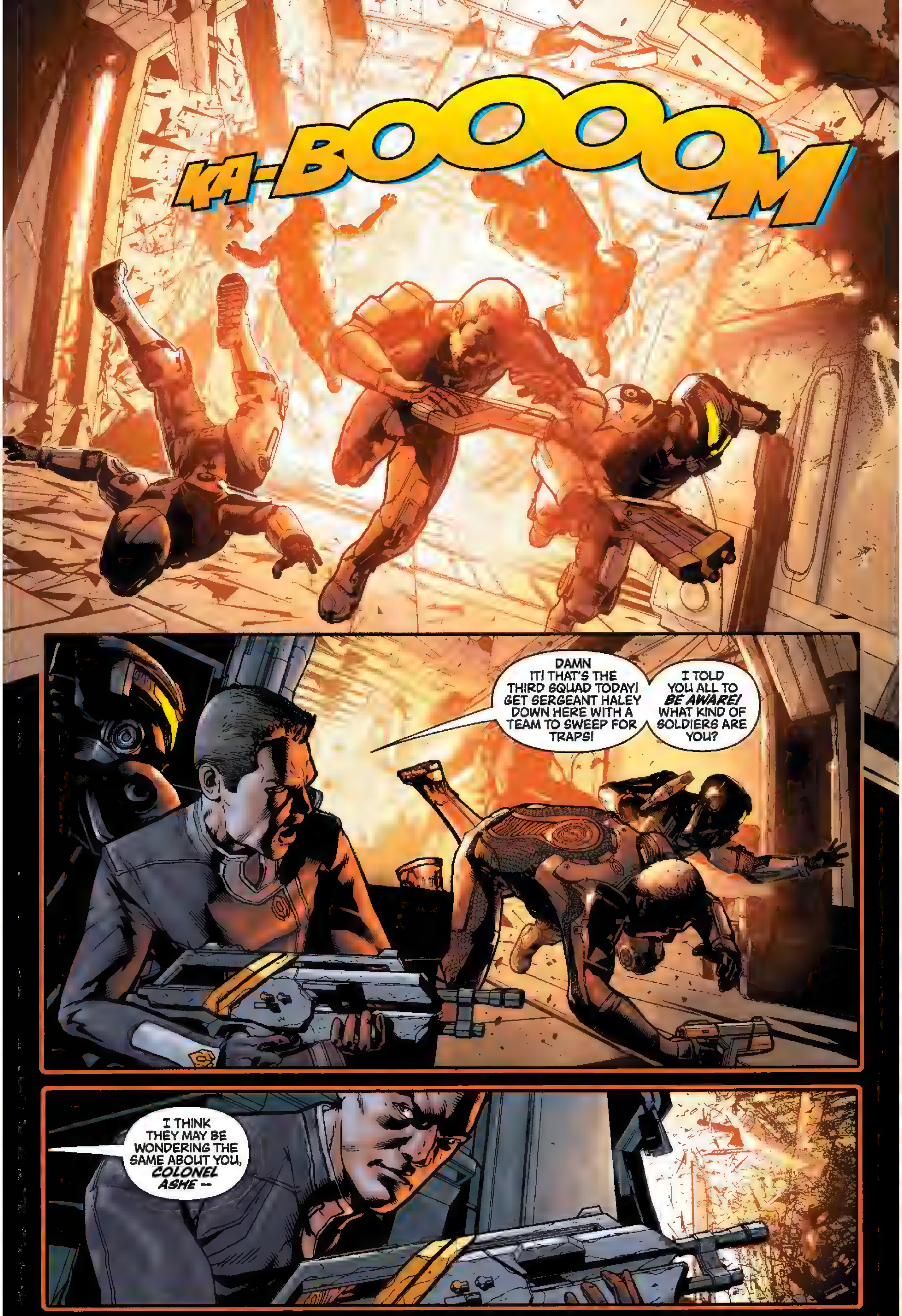

SKRAAKT!
AFTER HER!

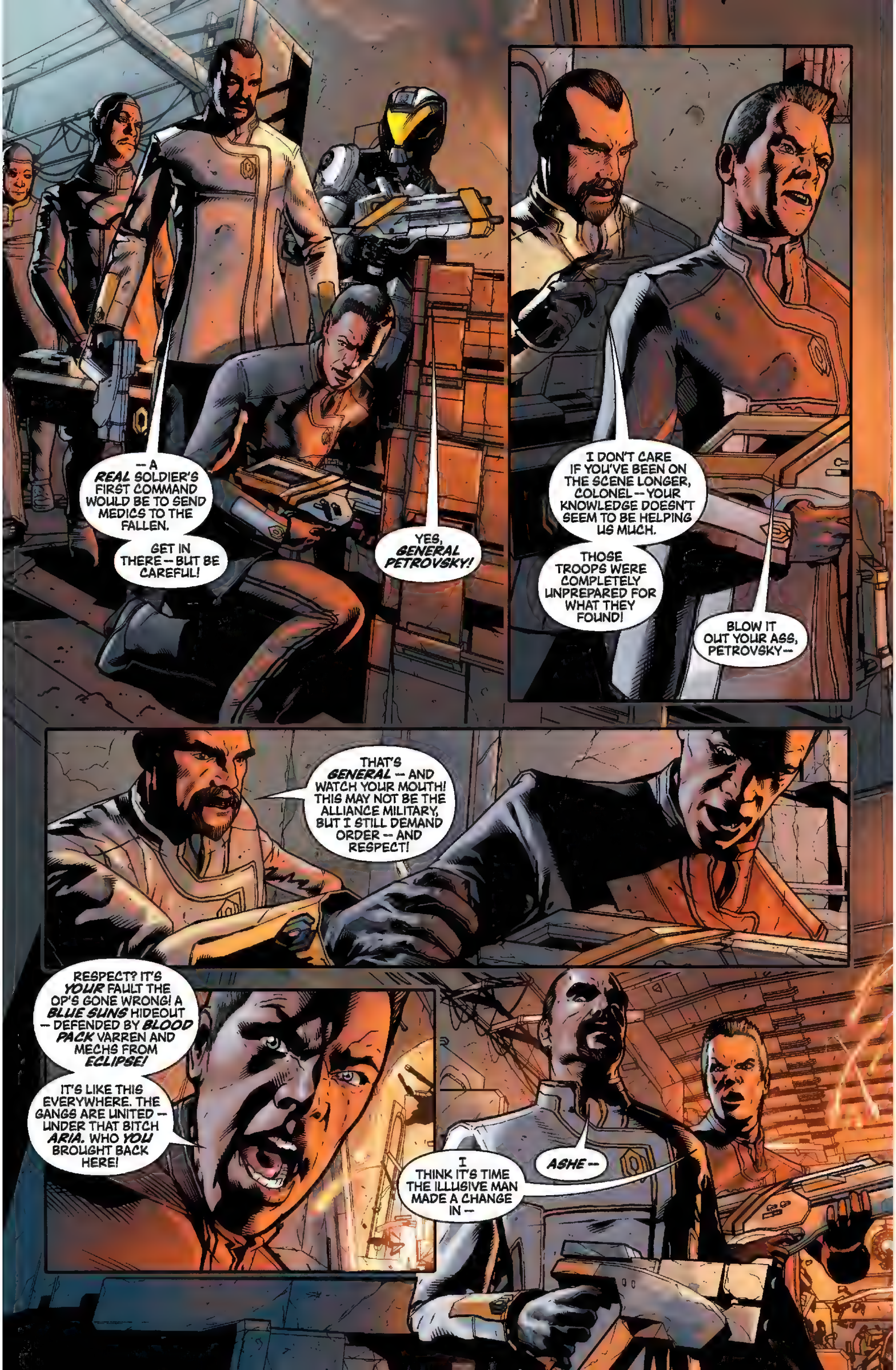

ASHE, YOU FOOL -- YOU NEARLY SHOT ME, TOO! DIDN'T YOU UNDERSTAND MY CODEWORD? *I WAS A HOSTAGE!*
LIKE I COULD FORGET, AFTER ALL YOUR NATTERING ON. ANTICLUS -- THE MOUTHY GUY ODYSSEUS GAGGED IN THE TROJAN HORSE.
ELBRUS WAS COMPROMISED, AND YOU COULDN'T SAY ANYTHING. I GOT IT. WHY DO YOU THINK I HAD THIS TEAM HERE?
AND NOW SHE'S LOOSE AGAIN -- BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T KILL HER WHEN YOU SHOULD HAVE!
I WAS FOLLOWING THE ILLUSIVE MAN'S ORDERS, COLONEL. AND YOU'D BETTER BEGIN FOLLOWING MINE --
-- STARTING RIGHT NOW. PUT THE WORD OUT TO ALL CERBERUS FORCES! WE'RE GOING TO FIND ARIA T'LOAK --
-- AND SECURE THIS STATION ONCE AND FOR ALL!
HE'S DAMN WELL CLOSE TO DOING THAT ALREADY --

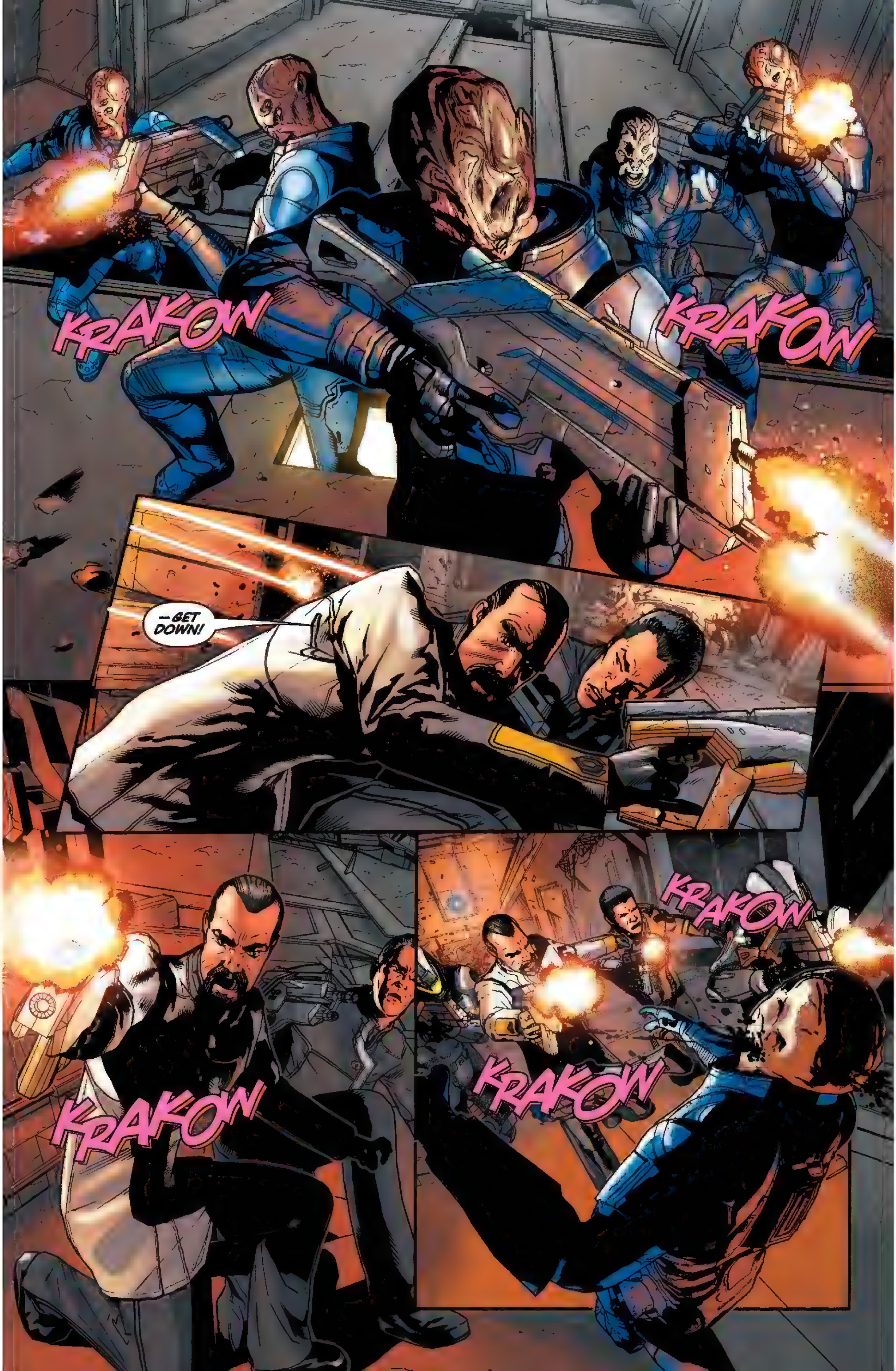

YOU HAD IT GOOD UNDER ARIA. BUT THESE CERBERUS PEOPLE WANT THE WHOLE PLACE TO THEMSELVES!
-- IF YOU PEOPLE DON'T GET YOUR SHIT TOGETHER AND STOP FIGHTING EACH OTHER!
SO WHO ARE WE SUPPOSED TO FIGHT FOR, ANTO? YOU?
YOU DON'T HAVE THE BALLS TO RUN A REVOLUTION. THERE'S ONLY ONE PERSON WE'D FOLLOW --
-- AND THEY KNOW THAT!
I'M GLAD TO HEAR THAT--
-- BECAUSE I'VE GOT A LITTLE JOB FOR EVERYONE -- AND THIS TIME, I'M CUTTING EVERYONE ON OMEGA IN.
REMEMBER, THEY'RE STILL JUST TOURISTS ON *OMEGA* -- BUT THIS TURF IS OURS. IF THEY WANT OMEGA --
--THEY'LL HAVE TO TAKE IT OVER OUR DEAD BODIES!

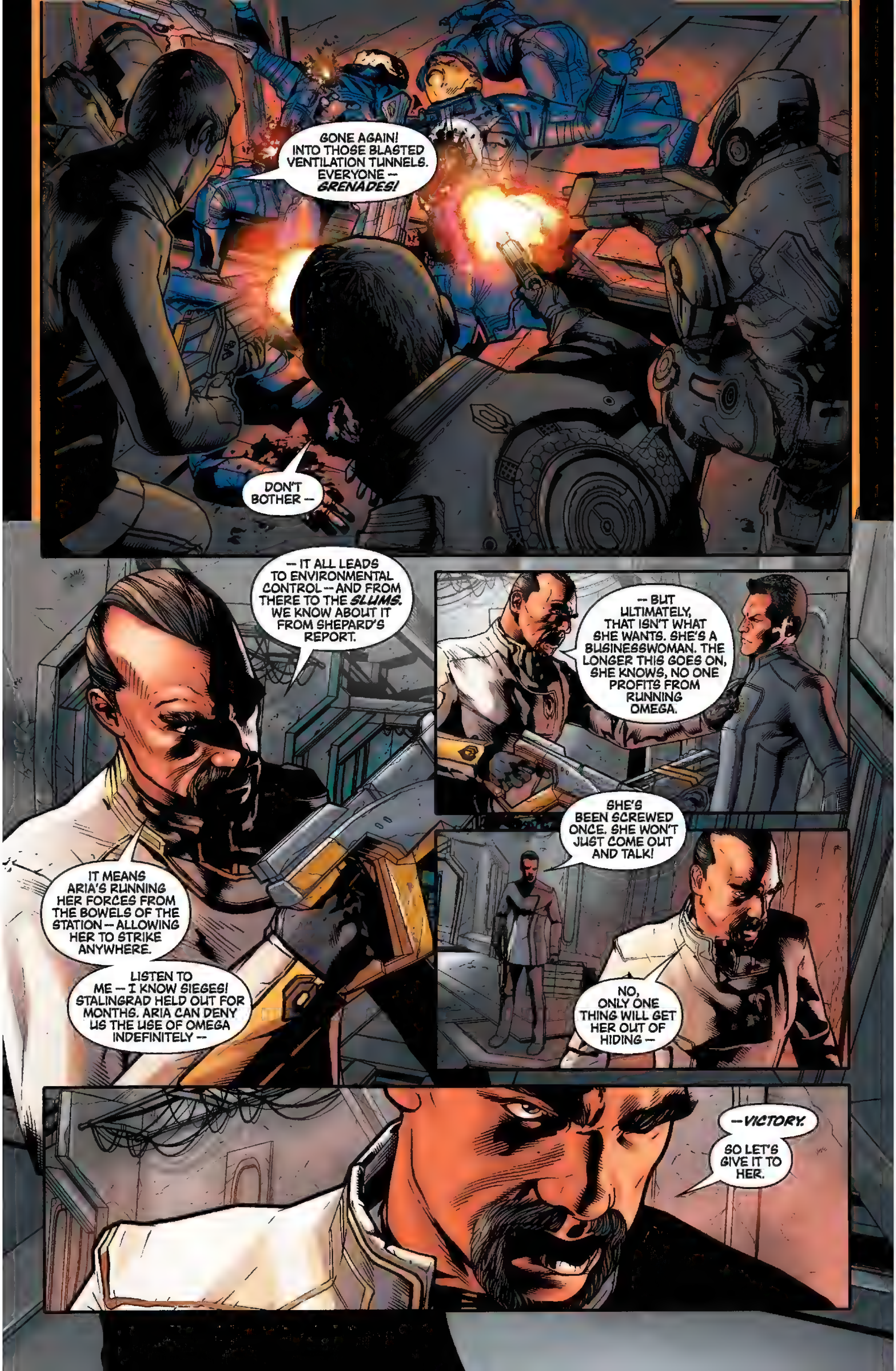

FOR GENERAL PETROVSKY, EVERY ENGAGEMENT PROVIDES THE CHANCE TO TEST ANOTHER EARTHLY MILITARY MAXIM ON A COSMIC BATTLEFIELD.
PUSH 'EM BACK, TROOPERS!
HERE, ON OMEGA, COMES THE CHANCE TO TEST ONE FROM THE ANCIENT FIELDS OF JUNGLE WARFARE --
--"THE GUERILLA WINS IF HE DOES NOT LOSE. THE CONVENTIONAL ARMY LOSES IF IT DOES NOT WIN."
LOOK ALIVE! DON'T LET THOSE *VARREN* GET A PIECE OF YOU!
CERBERUS IS NOT THE SYSTEMS ALLIANCE -- BUT THERE IS MUCH ABOUT ITS MILITARY THAT IS CONVENTIONAL.
HIGHLY SKILLED. REGIMENTED. PROFESSIONAL. READY FOR ANYTHING --
COLONEL ASHE SAYS THIS IS ONE OF THE BLUE SUNS' SCURRYHOLES!
WE'RE GONNA SHOW THOSE FILTHY ALIENS WHO'S IN --

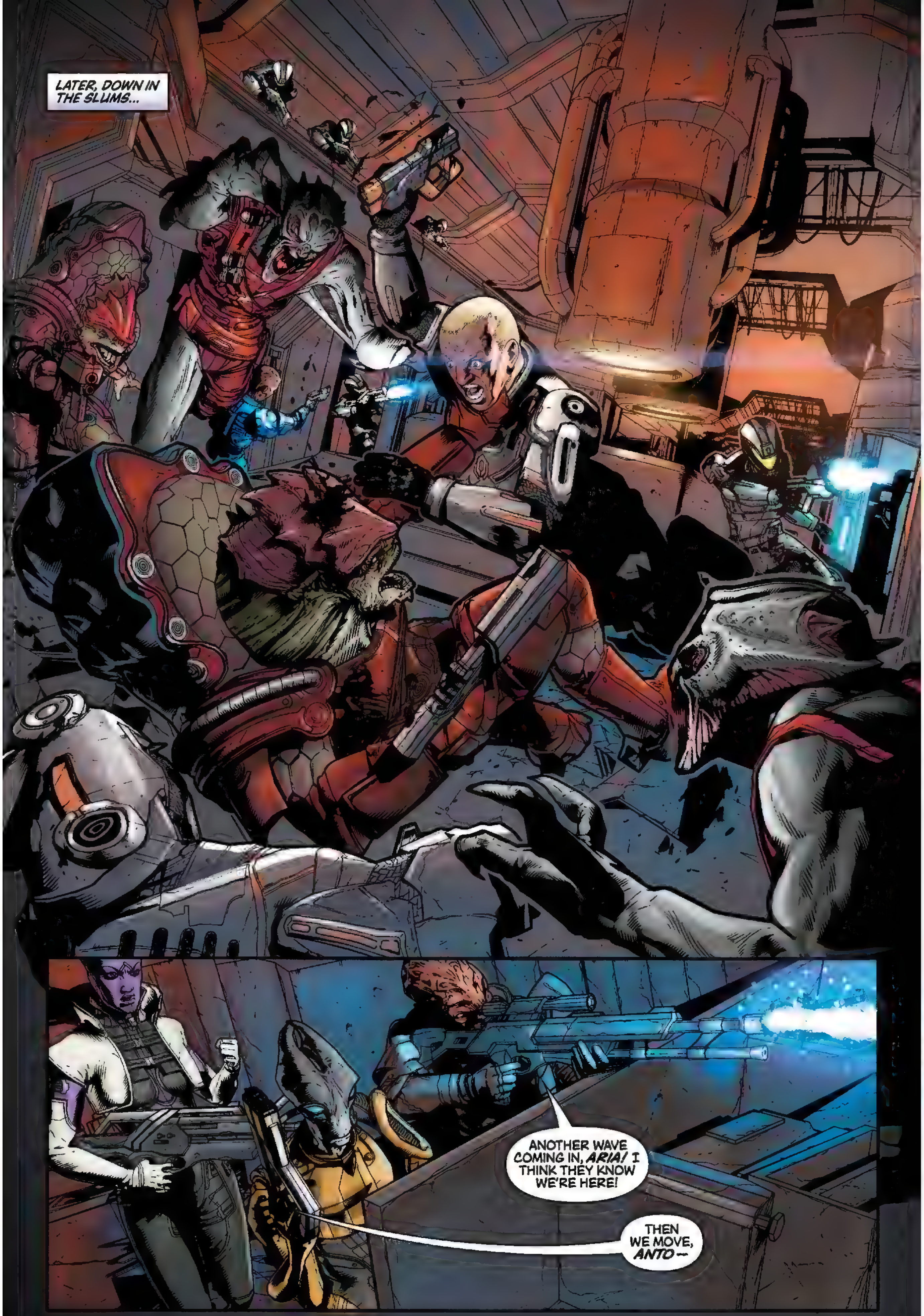

--CHARGE?
-- EXCEPT A BATTLE IN WHICH NONE OF THE NORMAL RULES APPLY...
MECHS! LET 'EM HAVE IT -- BUT GET READY TO FALL BACK! THEY GO NUCLEAR IF YOU HIT 'EM!
NO, WAIT! SOMETHING'S WRONG --
MINES!
EVERYONE, BACK! GET --

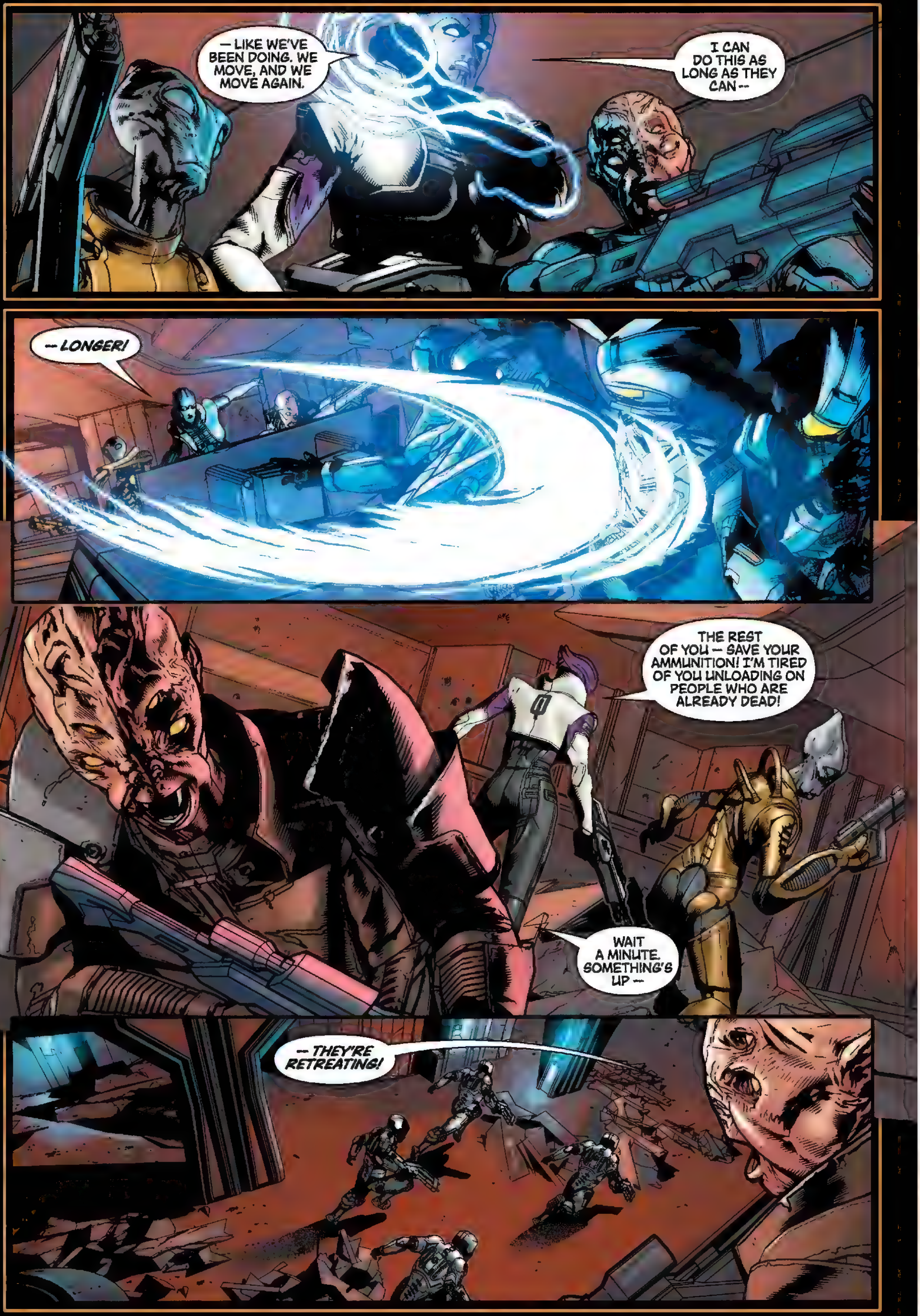

KA-BOOOOOM
DAMN IT! THAT'S THE THIRD SQUAD TODAY! GET SERGEANT HALEY DOWN HERE WITH A TEAM TO SWEEP FOR TRAPS!
I TOLD YOU ALL TO *BE AWARE!* WHAT KIND OF SOLDIERS ARE YOU?
I THINK THEY MAY BE WONDERING THE SAME ABOUT YOU, *COLONEL ASHE* --

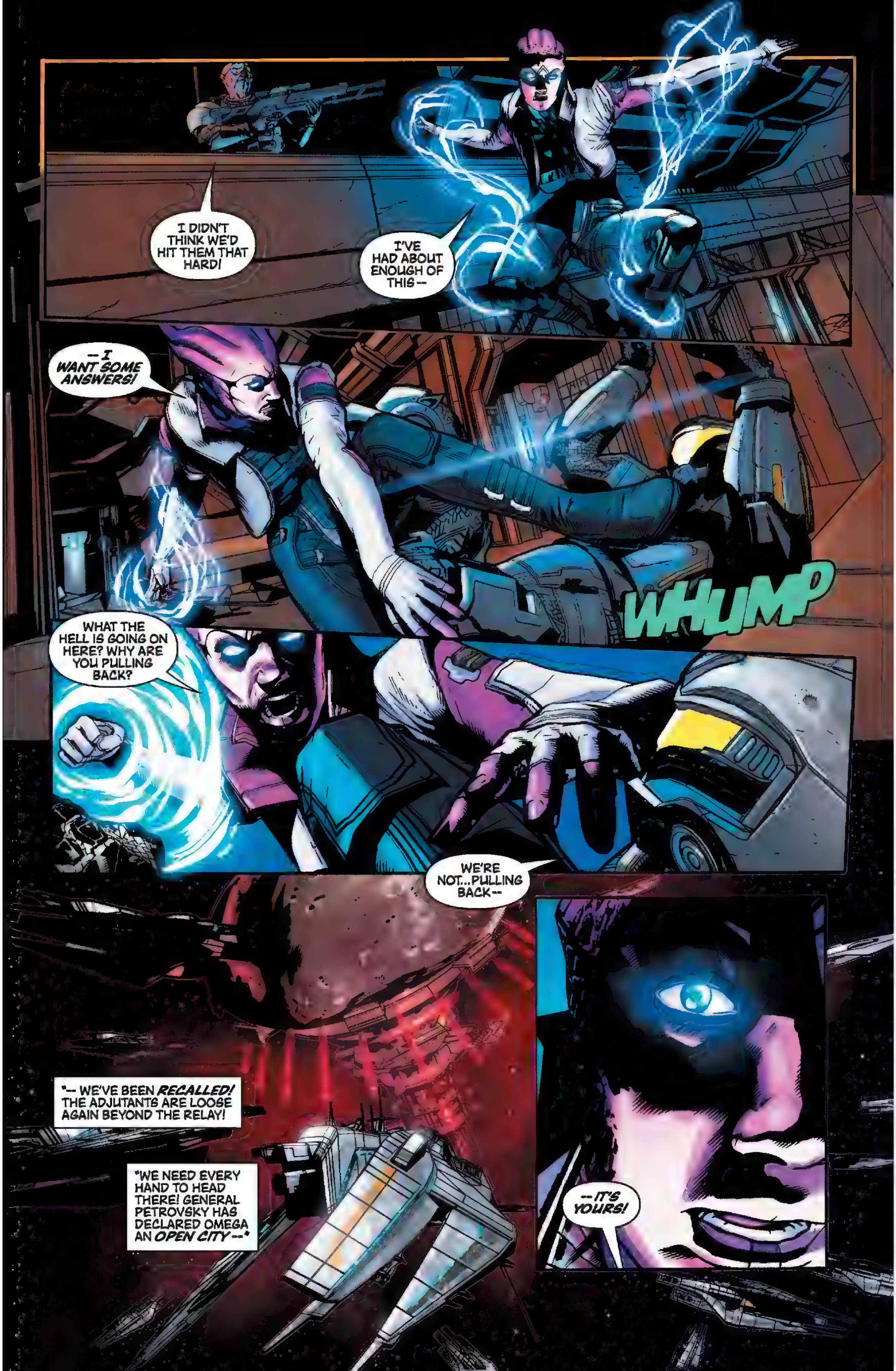

-- A *REAL* SOLDIER'S FIRST COMMAND WOULD BE TO SEND MEDICS TO THE FALLEN.
GET IN THERE -- BUT BE CAREFUL!
YES, *GENERAL PETROVSKY!*
I DON'T CARE IF YOU'VE BEEN ON THE SCENE LONGER, COLONEL -- YOUR KNOWLEDGE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE HELPING US MUCH.
THOSE TROOPS WERE COMPLETELY UNPREPARED FOR WHAT THEY FOUND!
BLOW IT OUT YOUR ASS, PETROVSKY--
THAT'S *GENERAL* -- AND WATCH YOUR MOUTH! THIS MAY NOT BE THE ALLIANCE MILITARY, BUT I STILL DEMAND ORDER -- AND RESPECT!
RESPECT? IT'S *YOUR* FAULT THE OP'S GONE WRONG! A *BLUE SUNS* HIDEOUT -- DEFENDED BY *BLOOD PACK* VARREN AND MECHS FROM *ECLIPSE!*
IT'S LIKE THIS EVERYWHERE. THE GANGS ARE UNITED -- UNDER THAT BITCH *ARIA*. WHO *YOU* BROUGHT BACK HERE!
ASHE --
I THINK IT'S TIME THE ILLUSIVE MAN MADE A CHANGE IN --

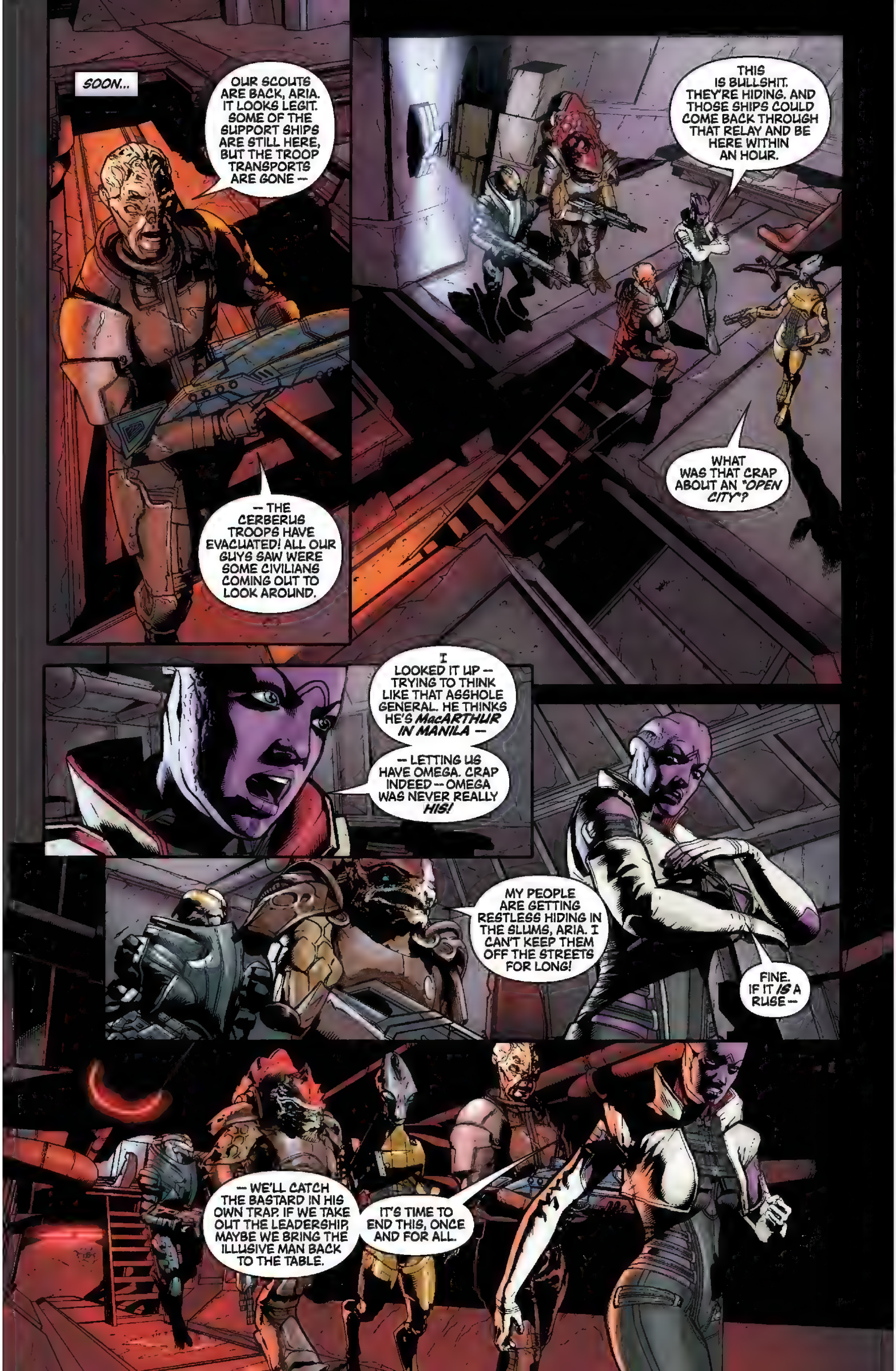

KRAKOW
KRAKOW
--GET DOWN!
KRAKOW
KRAKOW
KRAKOW

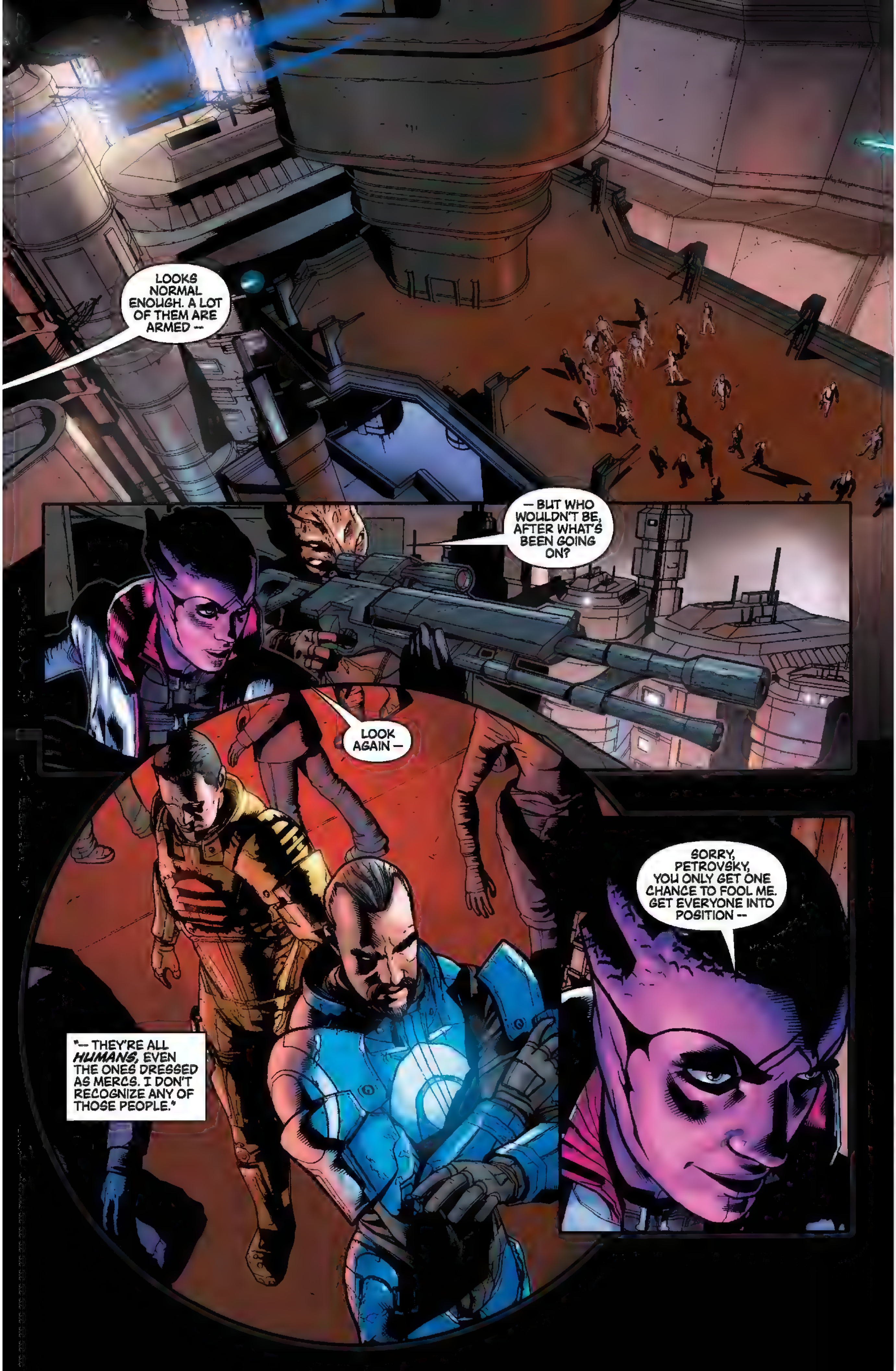

GONE AGAIN! INTO THOSE BLASTED VENTILATION TUNNELS. EVERYONE -- *GRENADES!*
DON'T BOTHER --
-- IT ALL LEADS TO ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL -- AND FROM THERE TO THE *SLUMS.* WE KNOW ABOUT IT FROM SHEPARD'S REPORT.
IT MEANS ARIA'S RUNNING HER FORCES FROM THE BOWELS OF THE STATION -- ALLOWING HER TO STRIKE ANYWHERE.
LISTEN TO ME -- I KNOW SIEGES! STALINGRAD HELD OUT FOR MONTHS. ARIA CAN DENY US THE USE OF OMEGA INDEFINITELY --
-- BUT ULTIMATELY, THAT ISN'T WHAT SHE WANTS. SHE'S A BUSINESSWOMAN. THE LONGER THIS GOES ON, SHE KNOWS, NO ONE PROFITS FROM RUNNING OMEGA.
SHE'S BEEN SCREWED ONCE. SHE WON'T JUST COME OUT AND TALK!
NO, ONLY ONE THING WILL GET HER OUT OF HIDING --
-- *VICTORY.*
SO LET'S GIVE IT TO HER.

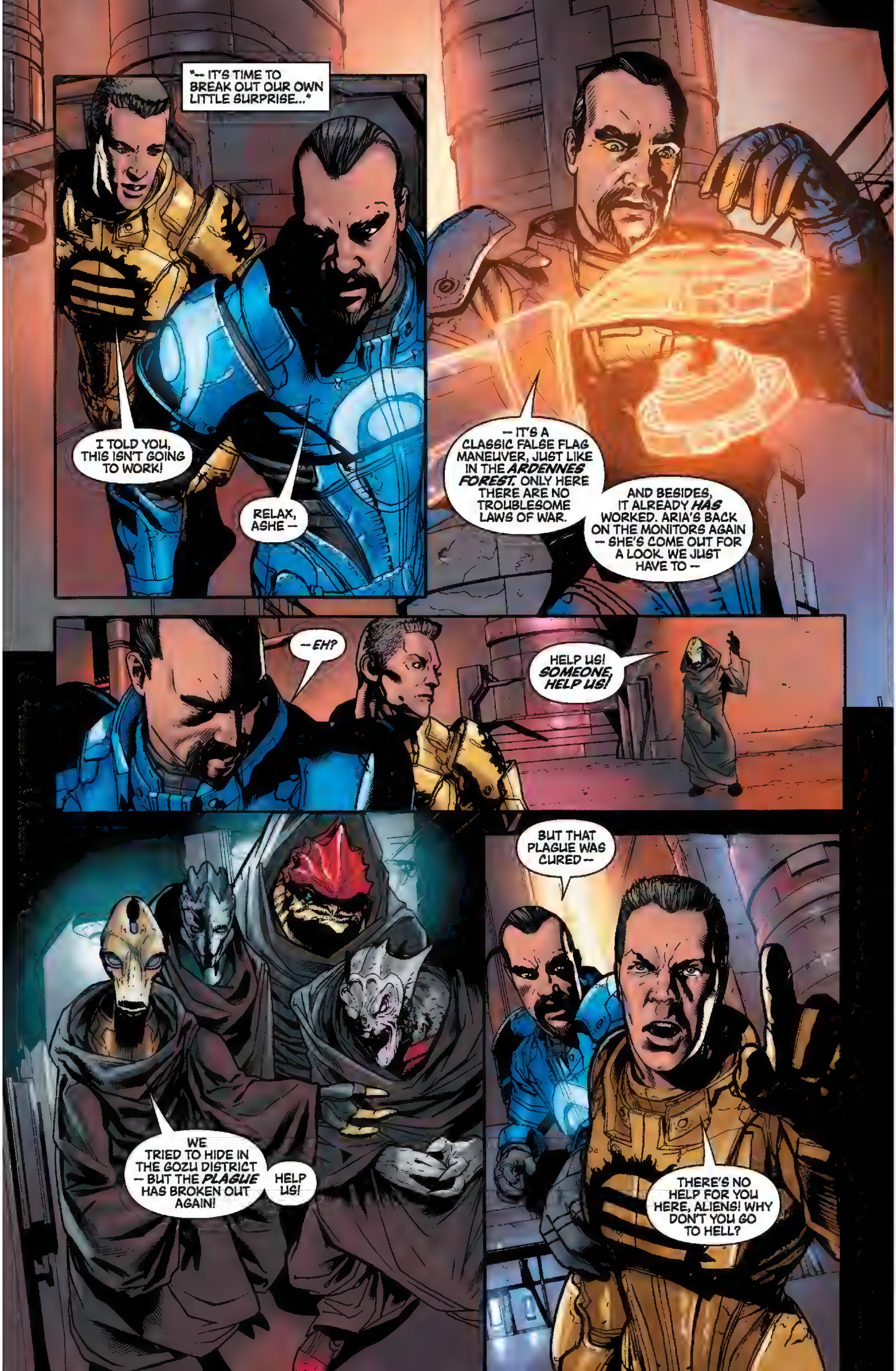

LATER, DOWN IN THE SLUMS...
ANOTHER WAVE COMING IN, ARIA! I THINK THEY KNOW WE'RE HERE!
THEN WE MOVE, ANTO--

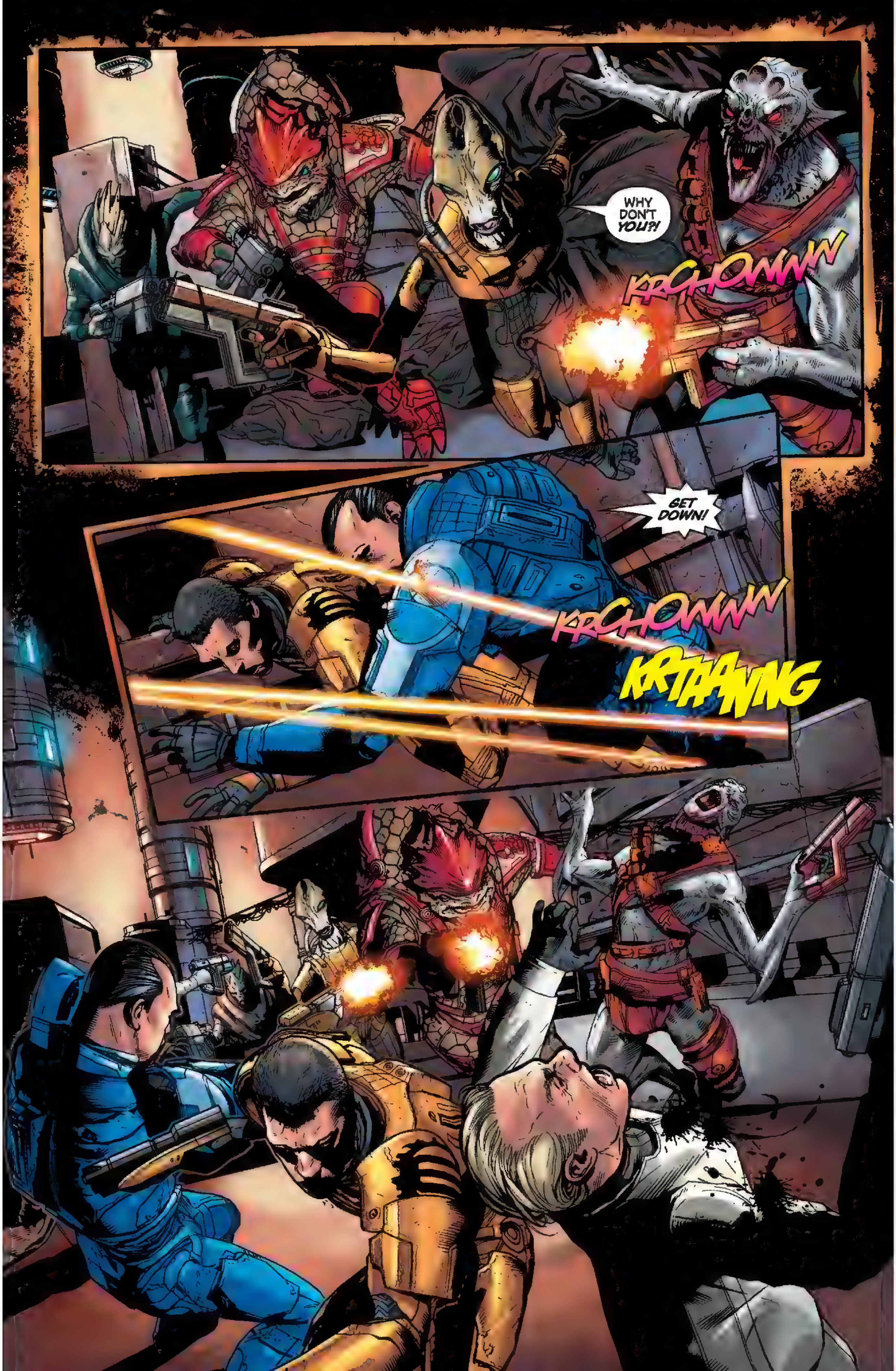

— LIKE WE'VE BEEN DOING. WE MOVE, AND WE MOVE AGAIN.
I CAN DO THIS AS LONG AS THEY CAN --
-- LONGER!
THE REST OF YOU -- SAVE YOUR AMMUNITION! I'M TIRED OF YOU UNLOADING ON PEOPLE WHO ARE ALREADY DEAD!
WAIT A MINUTE. SOMETHING'S UP --
-- THEY'RE RETREATING!

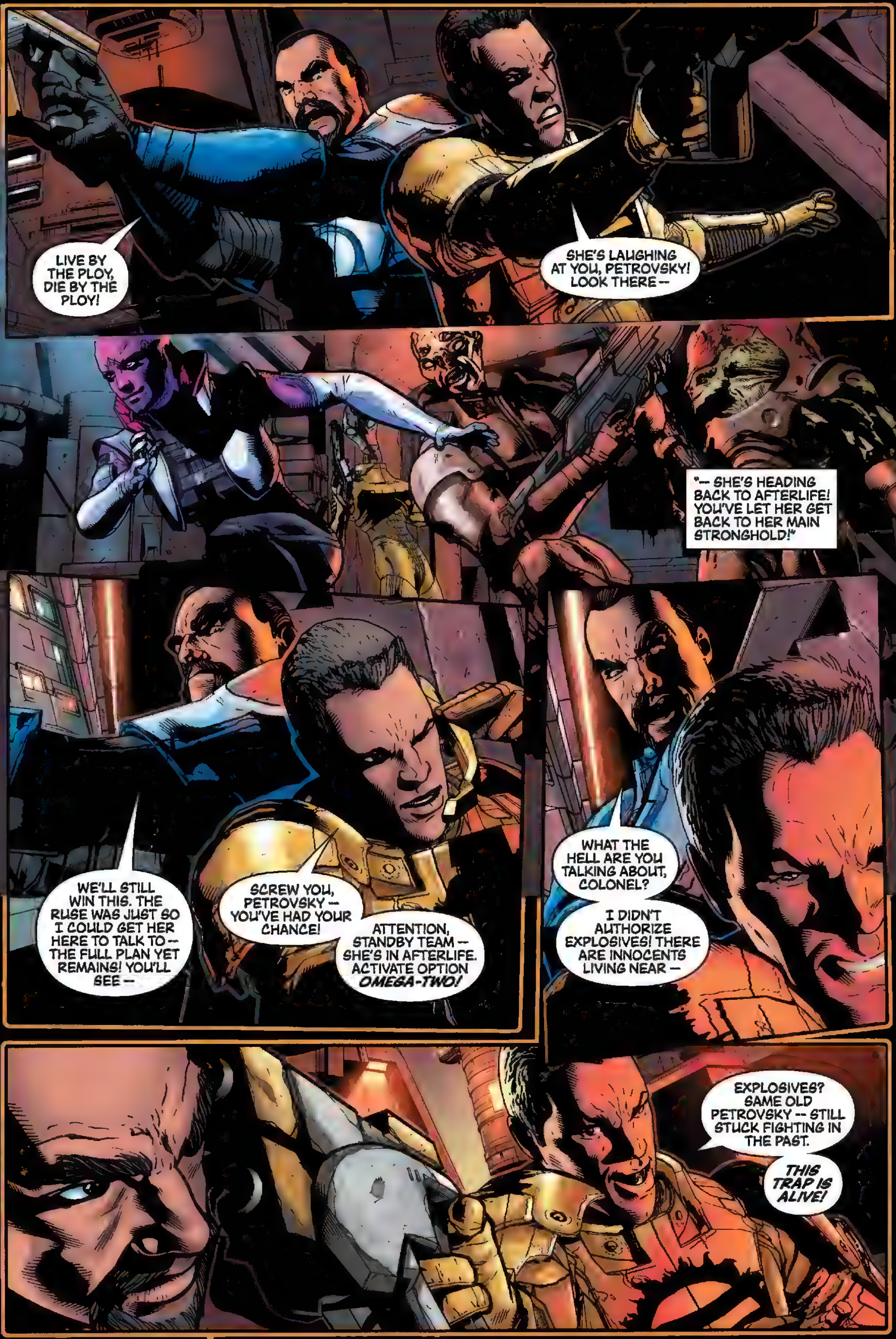

I DIDN'T THINK WE'D HIT THEM THAT HARD!
I'VE HAD ABOUT ENOUGH OF THIS --
-- I *WANT SOME ANSWERS!*
WHUMP
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE? WHY ARE YOU PULLING BACK?
WE'RE NOT...PULLING BACK--
"-- WE'VE BEEN *RECALLED!* THE ADJUTANTS ARE LOOSE AGAIN BEYOND THE RELAY!
"WE NEED EVERY HAND TO HEAD THERE! GENERAL PETROVSKY HAS DECLARED OMEGA AN *OPEN CITY* --"
-- *IT'S YOURS!*

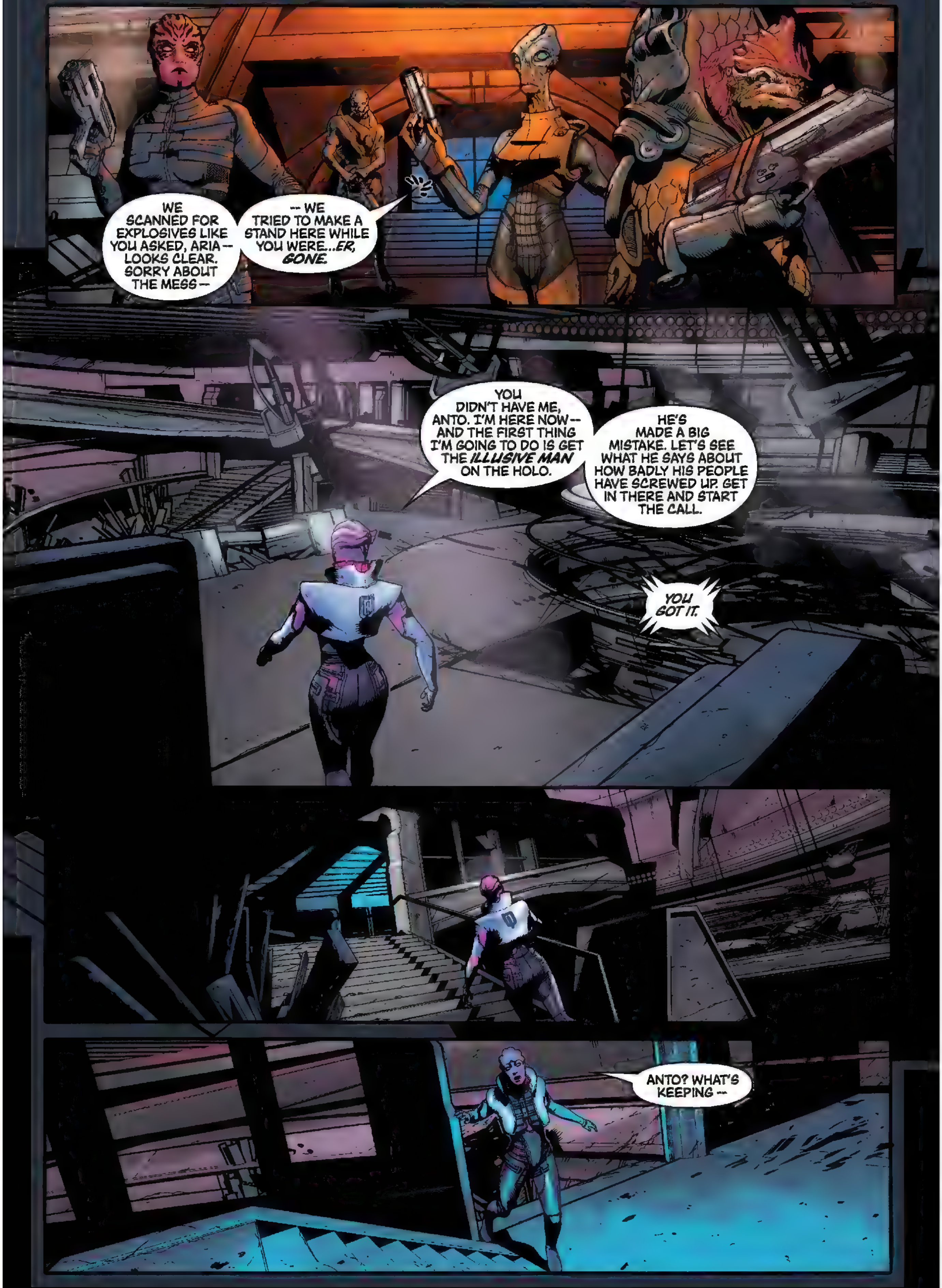

SOON...
OUR SCOUTS ARE BACK, ARIA. IT LOOKS LEGIT. SOME OF THE SUPPORT SHIPS ARE STILL HERE, BUT THE TROOP TRANSPORTS ARE GONE --
-- THE CERBERUS TROOPS HAVE EVACUATED! ALL OUR GUYS SAW WERE SOME CIVILIANS COMING OUT TO LOOK AROUND.
THIS IS BULLSHIT. THEY'RE HIDING. AND THOSE SHIPS COULD COME BACK THROUGH THAT RELAY AND BE HERE WITHIN AN HOUR.
WHAT WAS THAT CRAP ABOUT AN "OPEN CITY"?
I LOOKED IT UP -- TRYING TO THINK LIKE THAT ASSHOLE GENERAL. HE THINKS HE'S *MacARTHUR IN MANILA* --
-- LETTING US HAVE OMEGA. CRAP INDEED -- OMEGA WAS NEVER REALLY *HIS!*
MY PEOPLE ARE GETTING RESTLESS HIDING IN THE SLUMS, ARIA. I CAN'T KEEP THEM OFF THE STREETS FOR LONG!
FINE. IF IT *IS* A RUSE --
-- WE'LL CATCH THE BASTARD IN HIS OWN TRAP. IF WE TAKE OUT THE LEADERSHIP, MAYBE WE BRING THE ILLUSIVE MAN BACK TO THE TABLE.
IT'S TIME TO END THIS, ONCE AND FOR ALL.

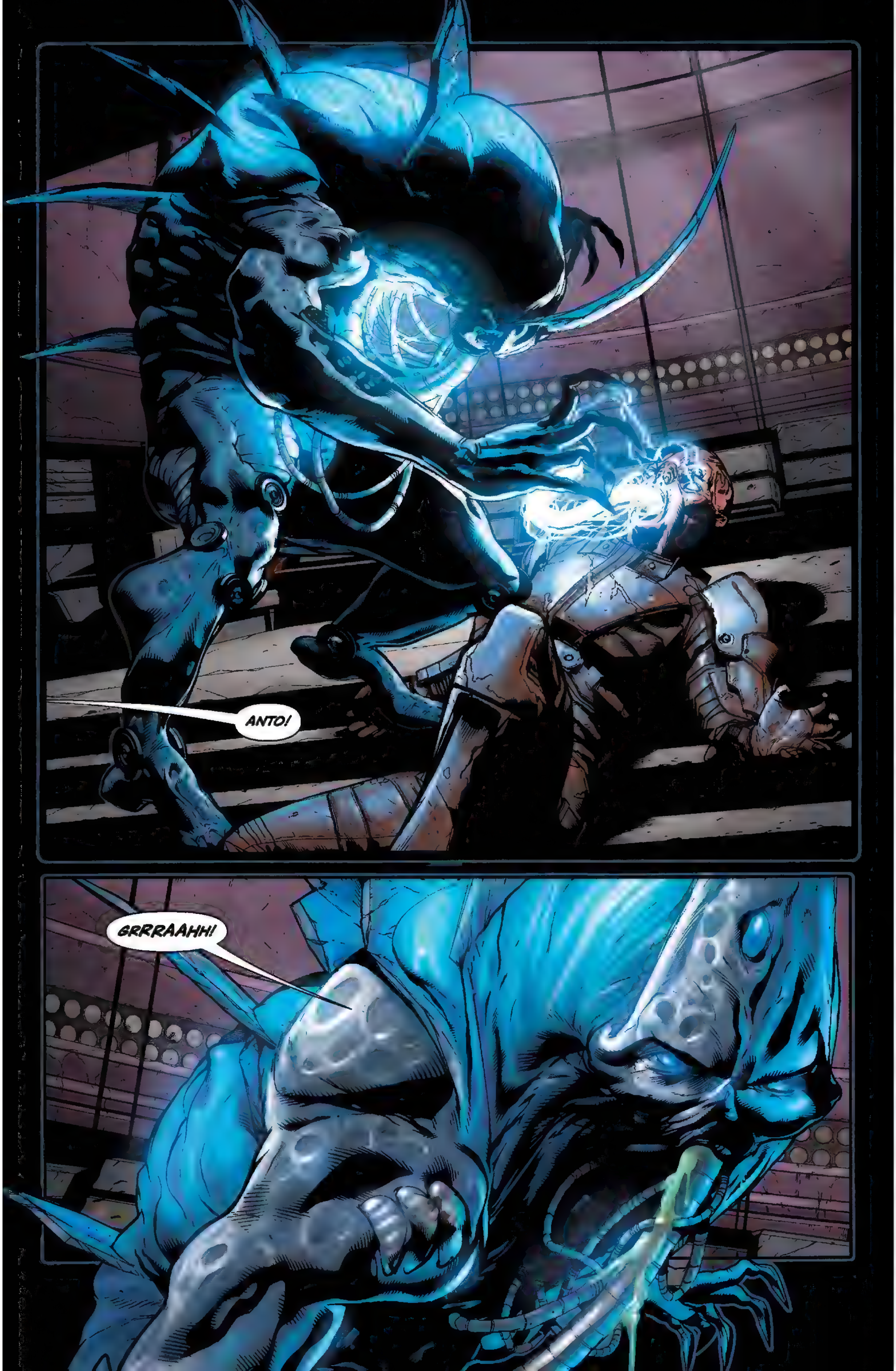

LOOKS NORMAL ENOUGH. A LOT OF THEM ARE ARMED --
— BUT WHO WOULDN'T BE, AFTER WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON?
LOOK AGAIN —
"— THEY'RE ALL *HUMANS,* EVEN THE ONES DRESSED AS MERCS. I DON'T RECOGNIZE ANY OF THOSE PEOPLE."
SORRY, PETROVSKY, YOU ONLY GET ONE CHANCE TO FOOL ME. GET EVERYONE INTO POSITION --

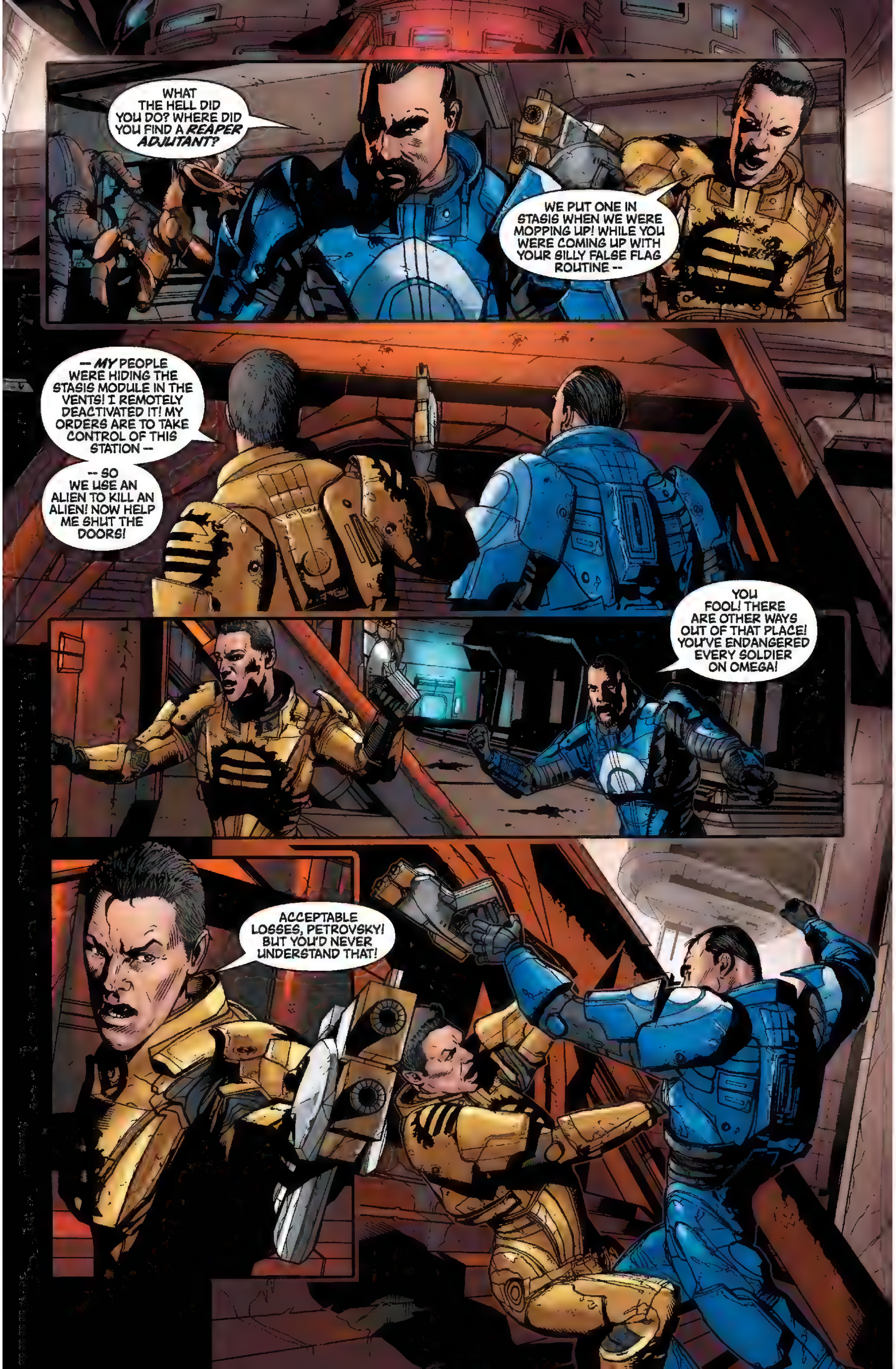

"-- IT'S TIME TO BREAK OUT OUR OWN LITTLE SURPRISE..."
I TOLD YOU, THIS ISN'T GOING TO WORK!
RELAX, ASHE --
-- IT'S A CLASSIC FALSE FLAG MANEUVER, JUST LIKE IN THE *ARDENNES FOREST.* ONLY HERE THERE ARE NO TROUBLESOME LAWS OF WAR.
AND BESIDES, IT ALREADY *HAS* WORKED. ARIA'S BACK ON THE MONITORS AGAIN -- SHE'S COME OUT FOR A LOOK. WE JUST HAVE TO --
-- *EH?*
HELP US! *SOMEONE, HELP US!*
WE TRIED TO HIDE IN THE GOZU DISTRICT -- BUT THE *PLAGUE* HAS BROKEN OUT AGAIN!
HELP US!
BUT THAT PLAGUE WAS CURED --
THERE'S NO HELP FOR YOU HERE, ALIENS! WHY DON'T YOU GO TO HELL?

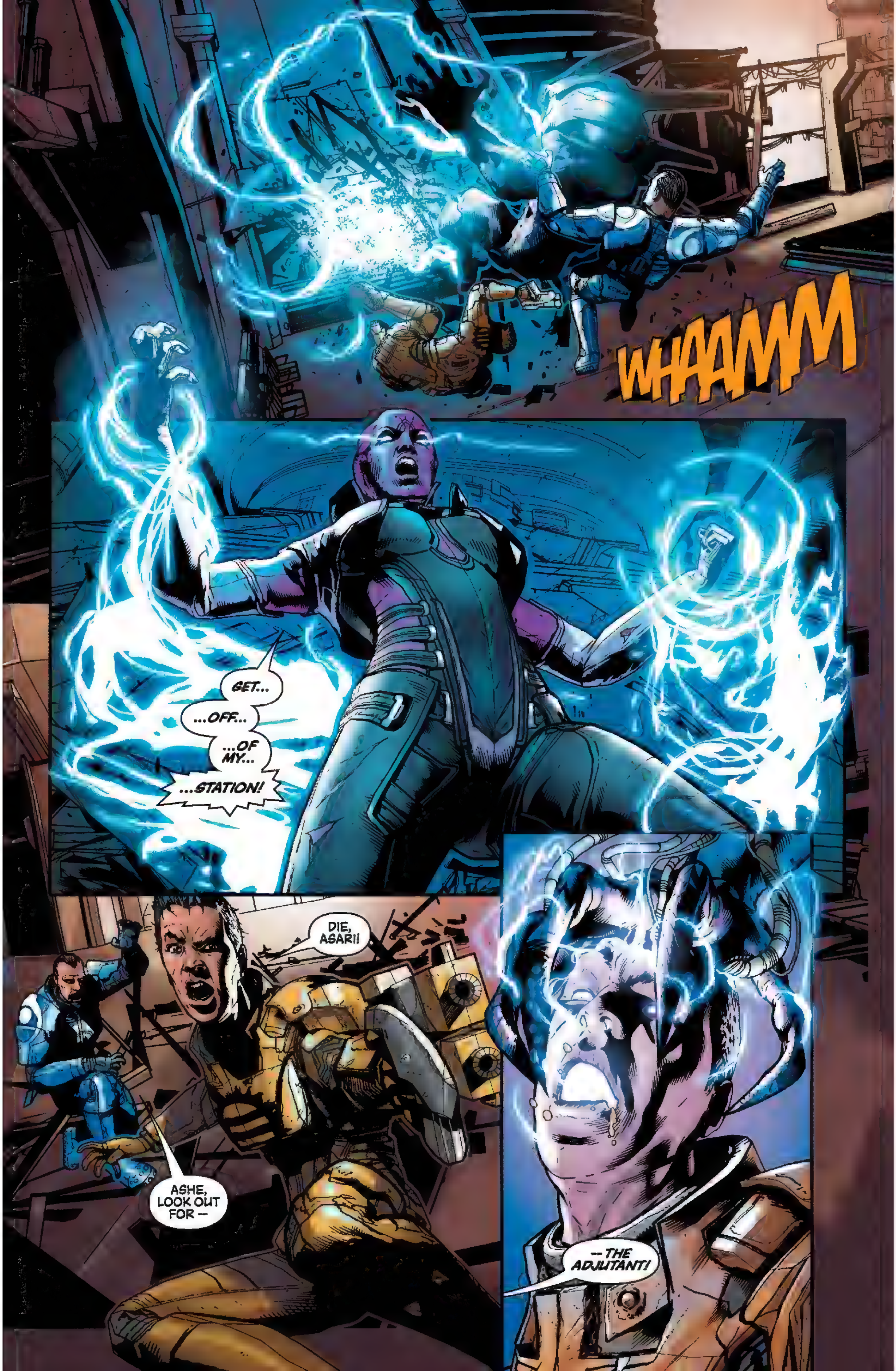

WHY DON'T YOU?!
KRCHOWWW
GET DOWN!
KRCHOWWW
KRTAANNG

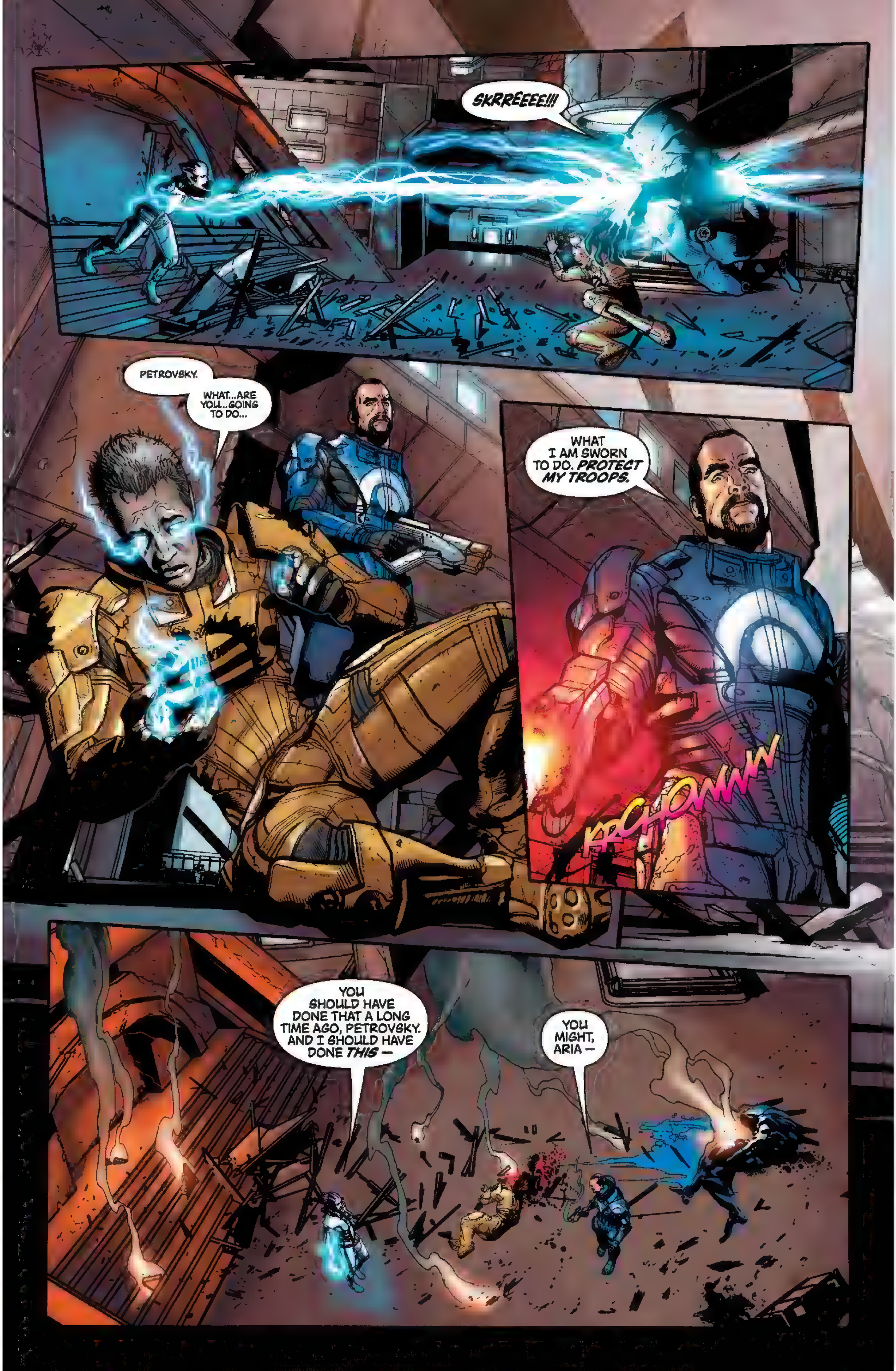

LIVE BY THE PLOY, DIE BY THE PLOY!
SHE'S LAUGHING AT YOU, PETROVSKY! LOOK THERE --
"-- SHE'S HEADING BACK TO AFTERLIFE! YOU'VE LET HER GET BACK TO HER MAIN STRONGHOLD!"
WE'LL STILL WIN THIS. THE RUSE WAS JUST SO I COULD GET HER HERE TO TALK TO -- THE FULL PLAN YET REMAINS! YOU'LL SEE --
SCREW YOU, PETROVSKY -- YOU'VE HAD YOUR CHANCE!
ATTENTION, STANDBY TEAM -- SHE'S IN AFTERLIFE. ACTIVATE OPTION *OMEGA-TWO!*
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, COLONEL?
I DIDN'T AUTHORIZE EXPLOSIVES! THERE ARE INNOCENTS LIVING NEAR --
EXPLOSIVES? SAME OLD PETROVSKY -- STILL STUCK FIGHTING IN THE PAST.
THIS TRAP IS ALIVE!

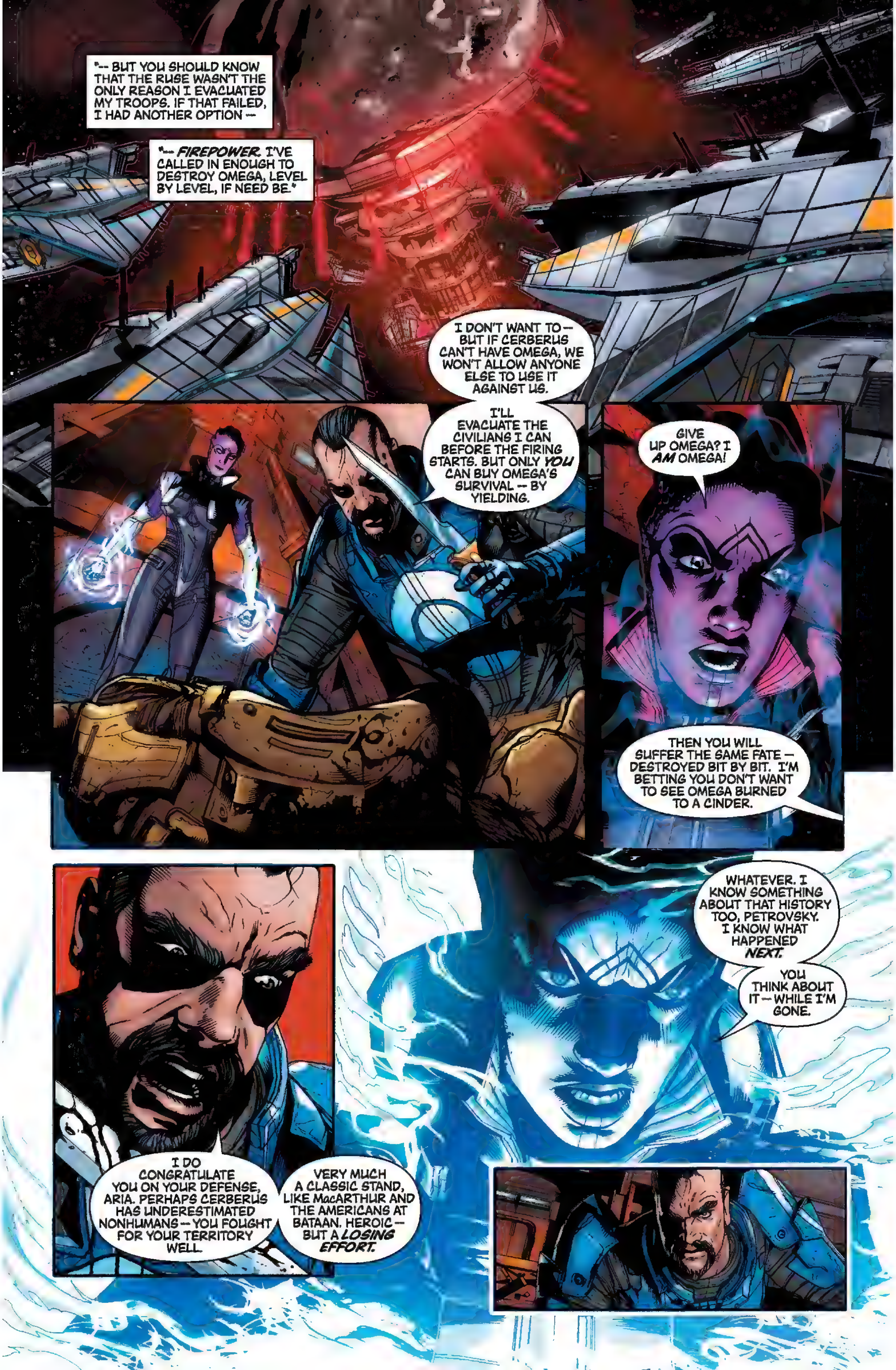

WE SCANNED FOR EXPLOSIVES LIKE YOU ASKED, ARIA -- LOOKS CLEAR. SORRY ABOUT THE MESS --
-- WE TRIED TO MAKE A STAND HERE WHILE YOU WERE...*ER, GONE.*
YOU DIDN'T HAVE ME, ANTO. I'M HERE NOW -- AND THE FIRST THING I'M GOING TO DO IS GET THE *ILLUSIVE MAN* ON THE HOLO.
HE'S MADE A BIG MISTAKE. LET'S SEE WHAT HE SAYS ABOUT HOW BADLY HIS PEOPLE HAVE SCREWED UP. GET IN THERE AND START THE CALL.
YOU GOT IT.
ANTO? WHAT'S KEEPING --

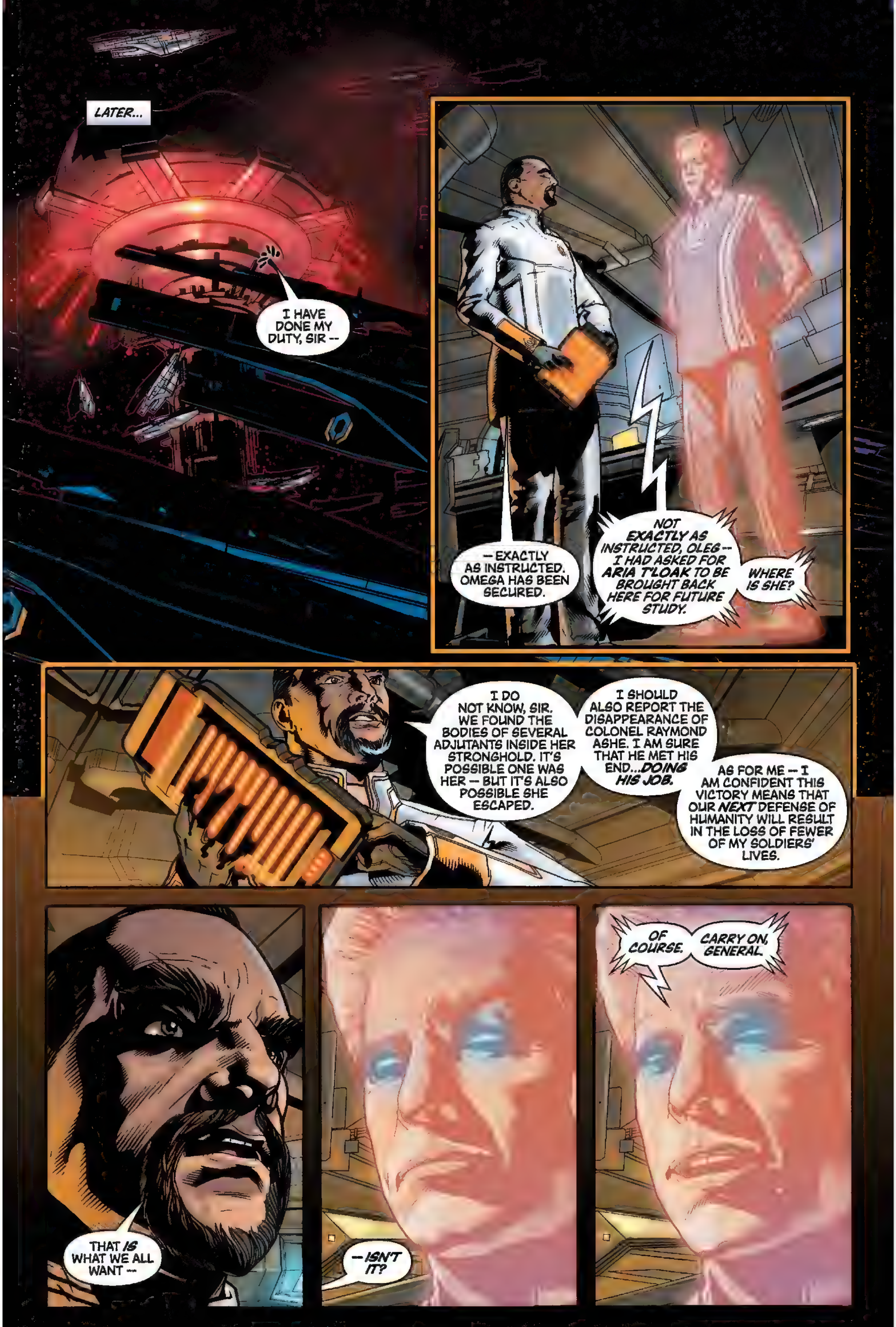

ANTO!
GRRRAAHH!


WHAT THE HELL DID YOU DO? WHERE DID YOU FIND A *REAPER ADJUTANT?*
WE PUT ONE IN STASIS WHEN WE WERE MOPPING UP! WHILE YOU WERE COMING UP WITH YOUR SILLY FALSE FLAG ROUTINE --
-- *MY* PEOPLE WERE HIDING THE STASIS MODULE IN THE VENTS! I REMOTELY DEACTIVATED IT! MY ORDERS ARE TO TAKE CONTROL OF THIS STATION --
-- SO WE USE AN ALIEN TO KILL AN ALIEN! NOW HELP ME SHUT THE DOORS!
YOU FOOL! THERE ARE OTHER WAYS OUT OF THAT PLACE! YOU'VE ENDANGERED EVERY SOLDIER ON OMEGA!
ACCEPTABLE LOSSES, PETROVSKY! BUT YOU'D NEVER UNDERSTAND THAT!


WHAAMM
GET...
...OFF...
...OF MY...
...STATION!
DIE, ASARI!
ASHE, LOOK OUT FOR --
-- THE ADJUTANT!


SKRREEEE!!!
PETROVSKY.
WHAT...ARE YOU...GOING TO DO...
WHAT I AM SWORN TO DO. *PROTECT MY TROOPS.*
KRCHOWWW
YOU SHOULD HAVE DONE THAT A LONG TIME AGO, PETROVSKY. AND I SHOULD HAVE DONE *THIS* —
YOU MIGHT, ARIA —


"-- BUT YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT THE RUSE WASN'T THE ONLY REASON I EVACUATED MY TROOPS. IF THAT FAILED, I HAD ANOTHER OPTION --
"-- *FIREPOWER.* I'VE CALLED IN ENOUGH TO DESTROY OMEGA, LEVEL BY LEVEL, IF NEED BE."
I DON'T WANT TO -- BUT IF CERBERUS CAN'T HAVE OMEGA, WE WON'T ALLOW ANYONE ELSE TO USE IT AGAINST US.
I'LL EVACUATE THE CIVILIANS I CAN BEFORE THE FIRING STARTS. BUT ONLY *YOU* CAN BUY OMEGA'S SURVIVAL -- BY YIELDING.
GIVE UP OMEGA? I *AM* OMEGA!
THEN YOU WILL SUFFER THE SAME FATE -- DESTROYED BIT BY BIT. I'M BETTING YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE OMEGA BURNED TO A CINDER.
I DO CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR DEFENSE, ARIA. PERHAPS CERBERUS HAS UNDERESTIMATED NONHUMANS -- YOU FOUGHT FOR YOUR TERRITORY WELL.
VERY MUCH A CLASSIC STAND, LIKE MacARTHUR AND THE AMERICANS AT BATAAN. HEROIC -- BUT A *LOSING EFFORT.*
WHATEVER. I KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT THAT HISTORY TOO, PETROVSKY. I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED *NEXT.*
YOU THINK ABOUT IT -- WHILE I'M GONE.


LATER...
I HAVE DONE MY DUTY, SIR --
-- EXACTLY AS INSTRUCTED. OMEGA HAS BEEN SECURED.
NOT *EXACTLY* AS INSTRUCTED, OLEG -- I HAD ASKED FOR *ARIA T'LOAK* TO BE BROUGHT BACK HERE FOR FUTURE STUDY.
WHERE IS SHE?
I DO NOT KNOW, SIR. WE FOUND THE BODIES OF SEVERAL ADJUTANTS INSIDE HER STRONGHOLD. IT'S POSSIBLE ONE WAS HER -- BUT IT'S ALSO POSSIBLE SHE ESCAPED.
I SHOULD ALSO REPORT THE DISAPPEARANCE OF COLONEL RAYMOND ASHE. I AM SURE THAT HE MET HIS END...*DOING HIS JOB.*
AS FOR ME -- I AM CONFIDENT THIS VICTORY MEANS THAT OUR *NEXT* DEFENSE OF HUMANITY WILL RESULT IN THE LOSS OF FEWER OF MY SOLDIERS' LIVES.
THAT *IS* WHAT WE ALL WANT --
-- *ISN'T IT?*
OF COURSE.
CARRY ON, GENERAL.

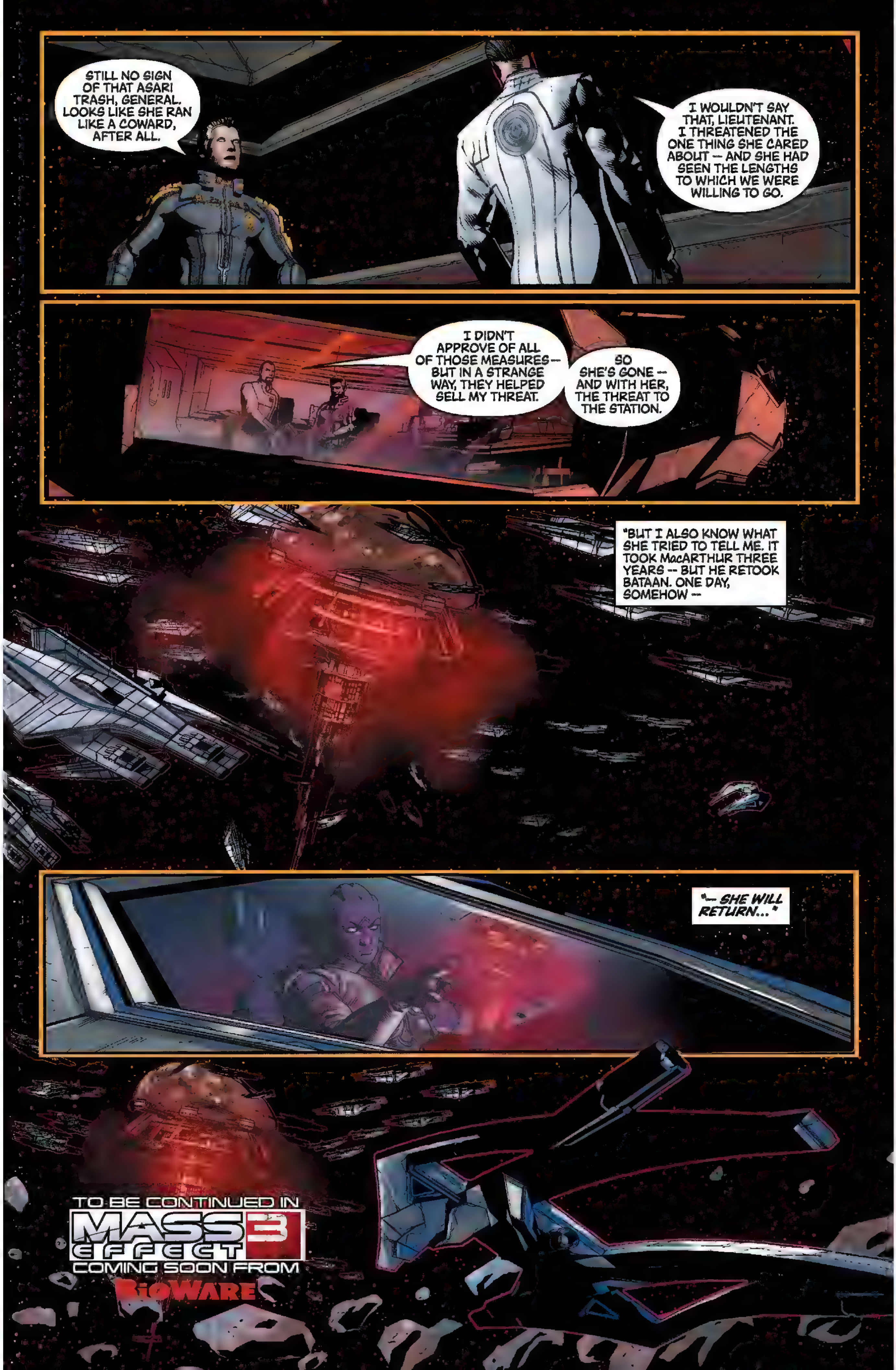

STILL NO SIGN OF THAT ASARI TRASH, GENERAL. LOOKS LIKE SHE RAN LIKE A COWARD, AFTER ALL.
I WOULDN'T SAY THAT, LIEUTENANT. I THREATENED THE ONE THING SHE CARED ABOUT -- AND SHE HAD SEEN THE LENGTHS TO WHICH WE WERE WILLING TO GO.
I DIDN'T APPROVE OF ALL OF THOSE MEASURES -- BUT IN A STRANGE WAY, THEY HELPED SELL MY THREAT.
SO SHE'S GONE -- AND WITH HER, THE THREAT TO THE STATION.
"BUT I ALSO KNOW WHAT SHE TRIED TO TELL ME. IT TOOK MacARTHUR THREE YEARS -- BUT HE RETOOK BATAAN. ONE DAY, SOMEHOW --
"-- SHE WILL RETURN..."
TO BE CONTINUED IN
MASS EFFECT 3
COMING SOON FROM
BIOWARE

Illustration by Anthony Palumbo

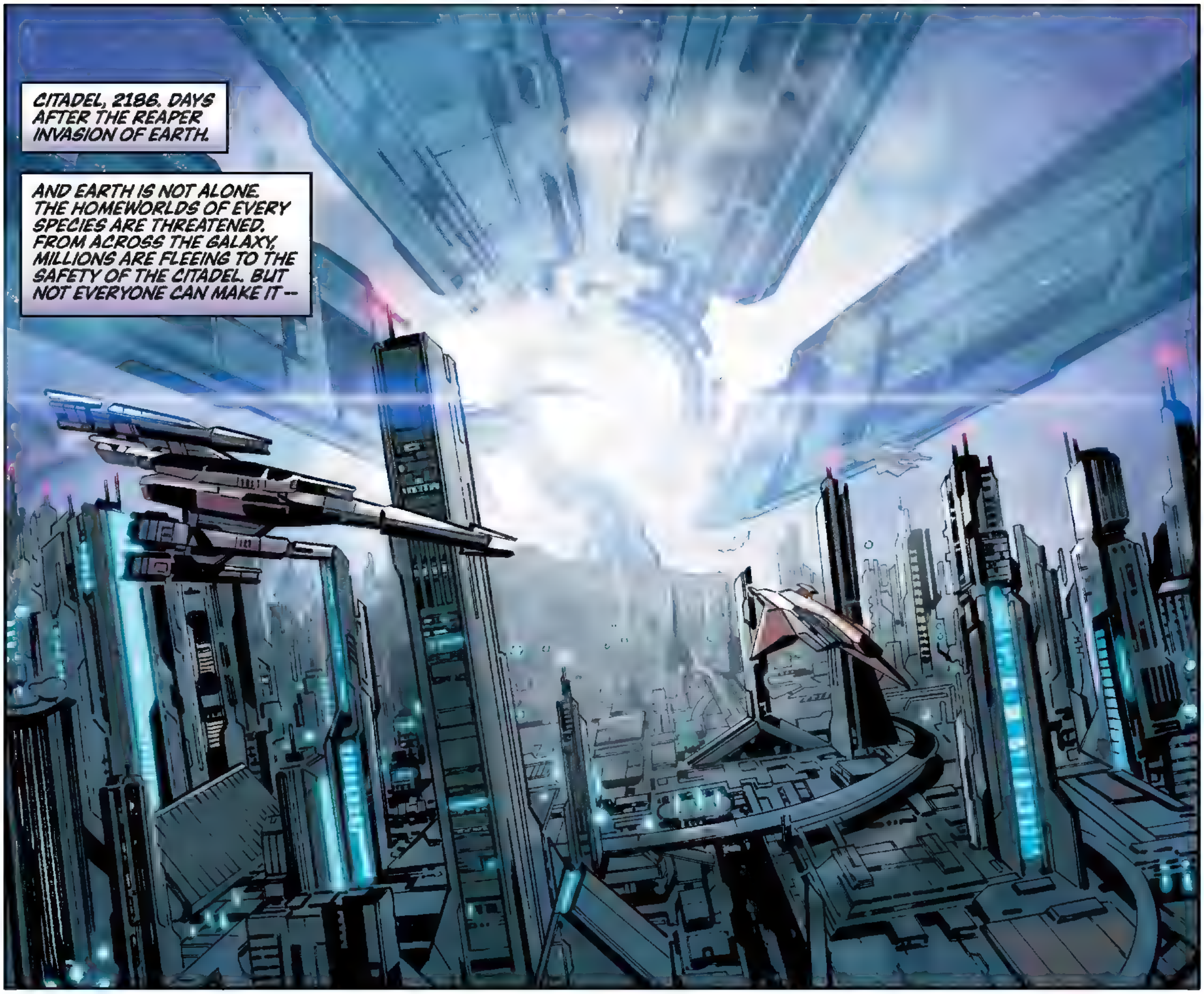
HOMEWORLDS
JAMES VEGA

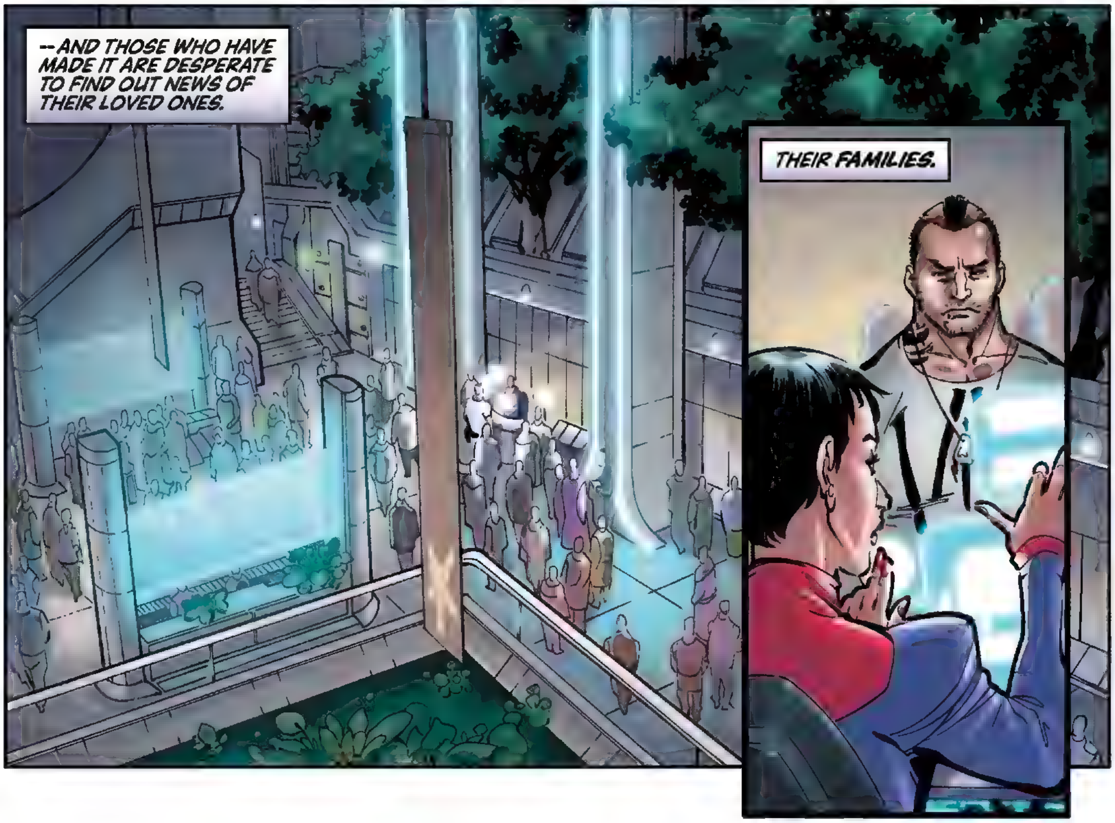
STORY
Mac Walters

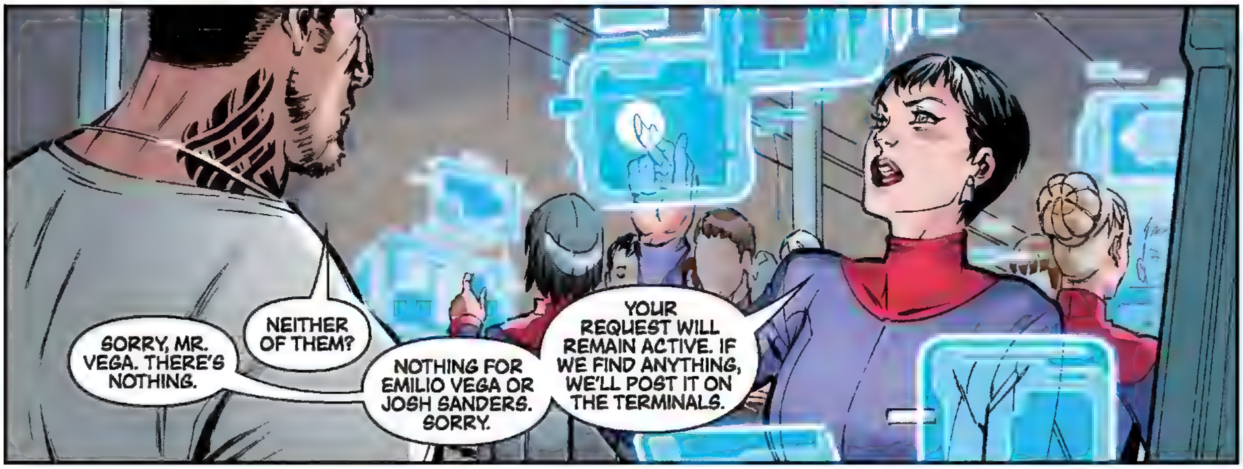
ART
Eduardo Francisco

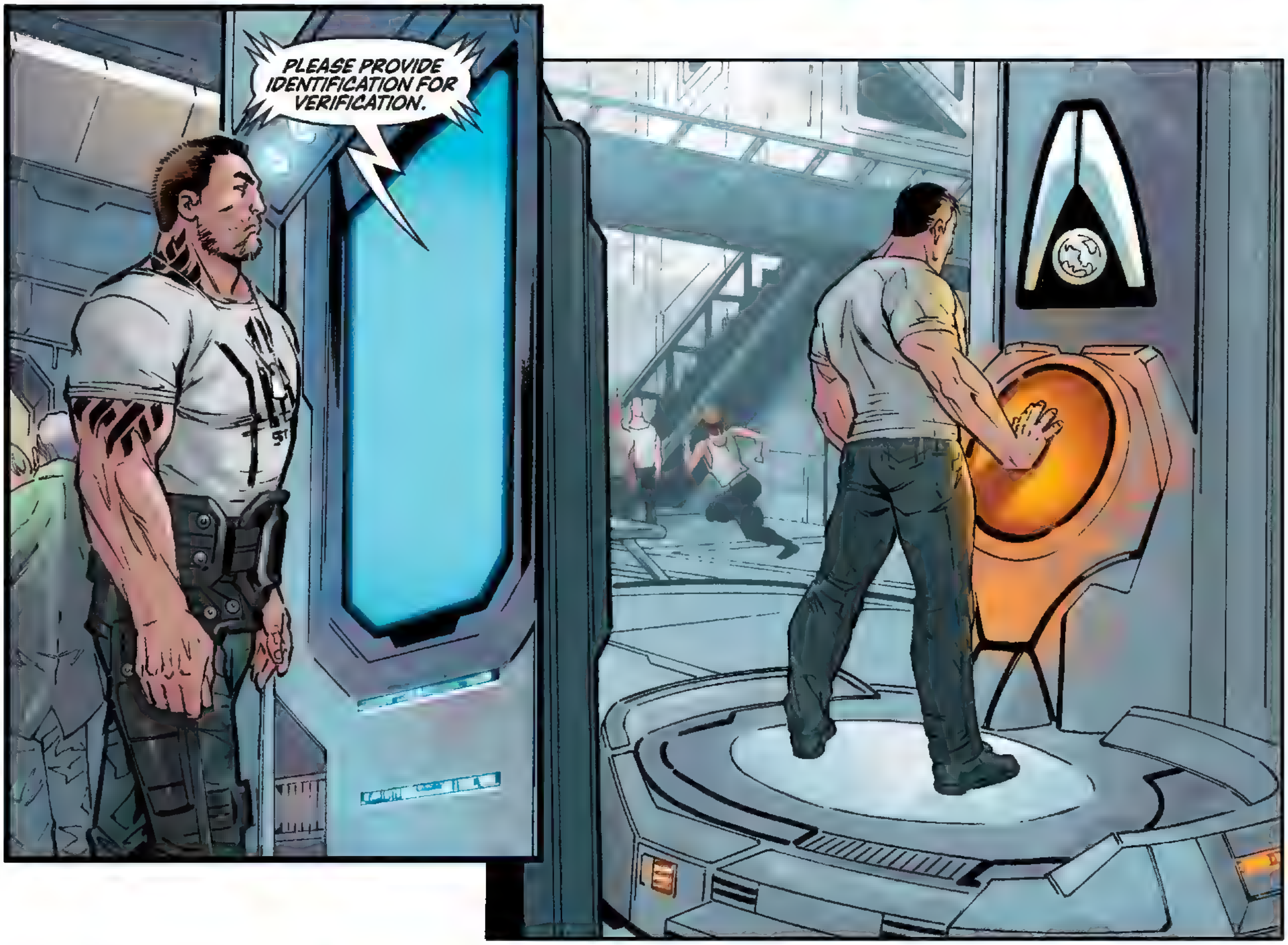
COLORS
Michael Atiyeh

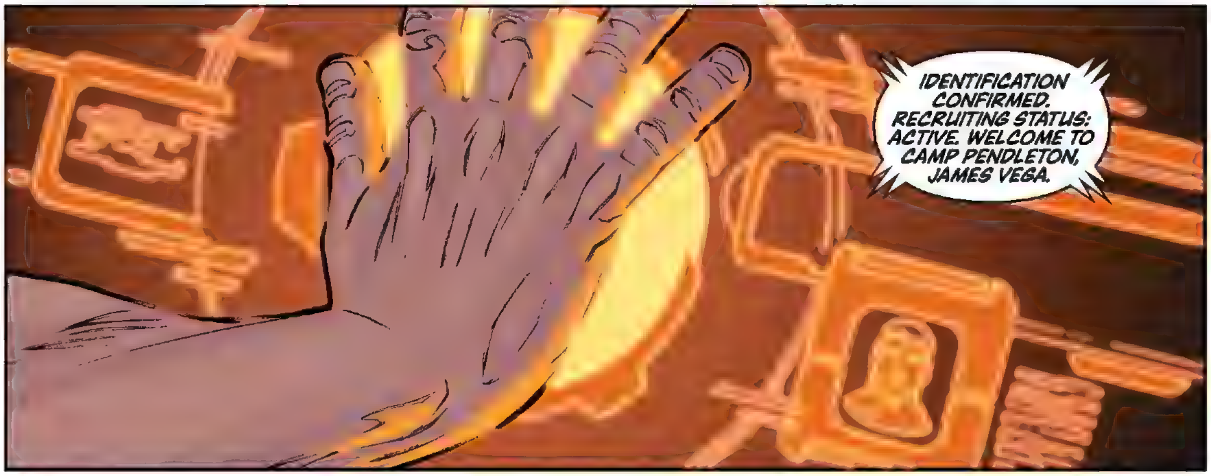
LETTERING
Michael Heisler

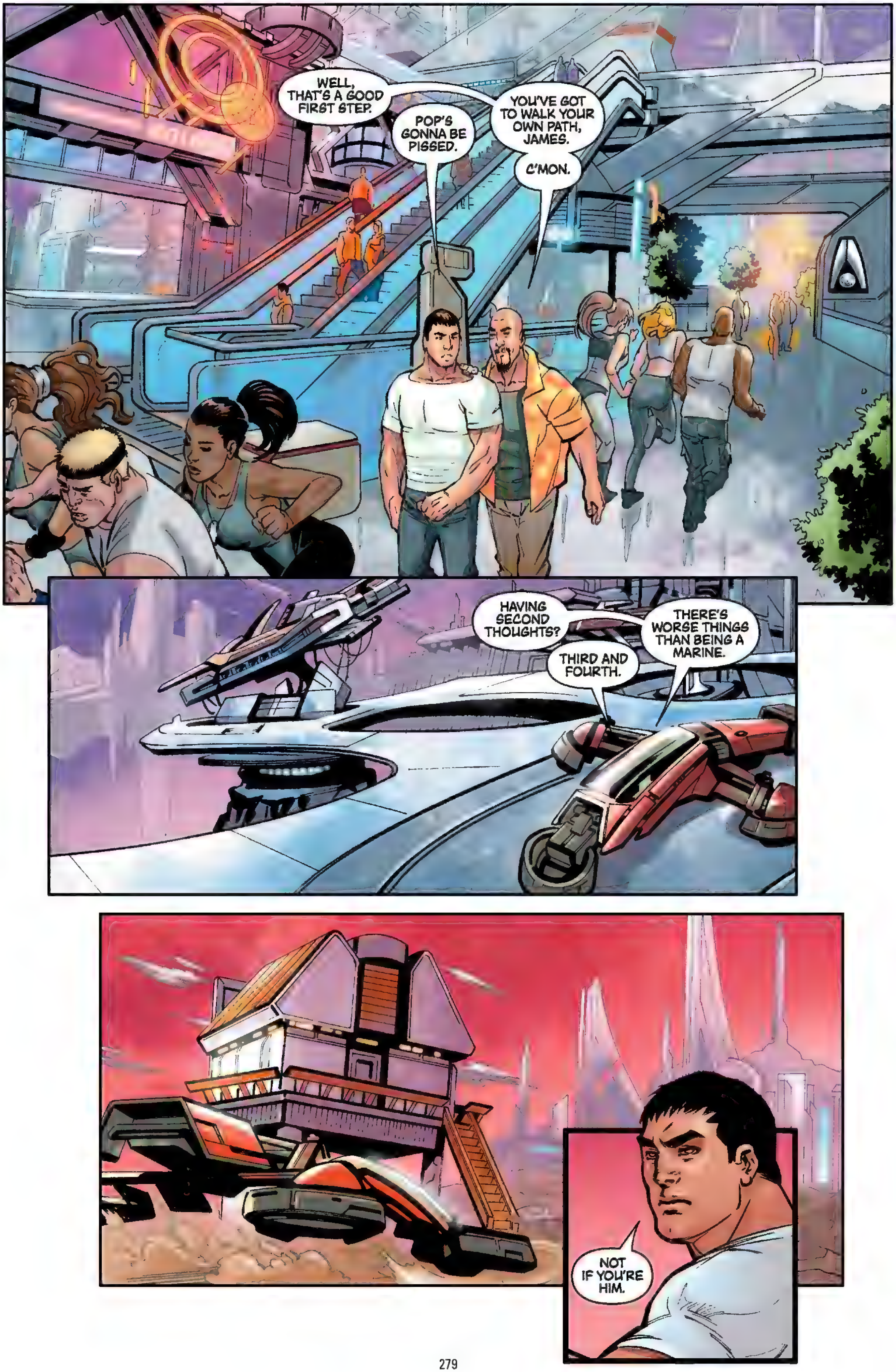

CITADEL, 2186. DAYS AFTER THE REAPER INVASION OF EARTH.
AND EARTH IS NOT ALONE. THE HOMEWORLDS OF EVERY SPECIES ARE THREATENED. FROM ACROSS THE GALAXY, MILLIONS ARE FLEEING TO THE SAFETY OF THE CITADEL. BUT NOT EVERYONE CAN MAKE IT --

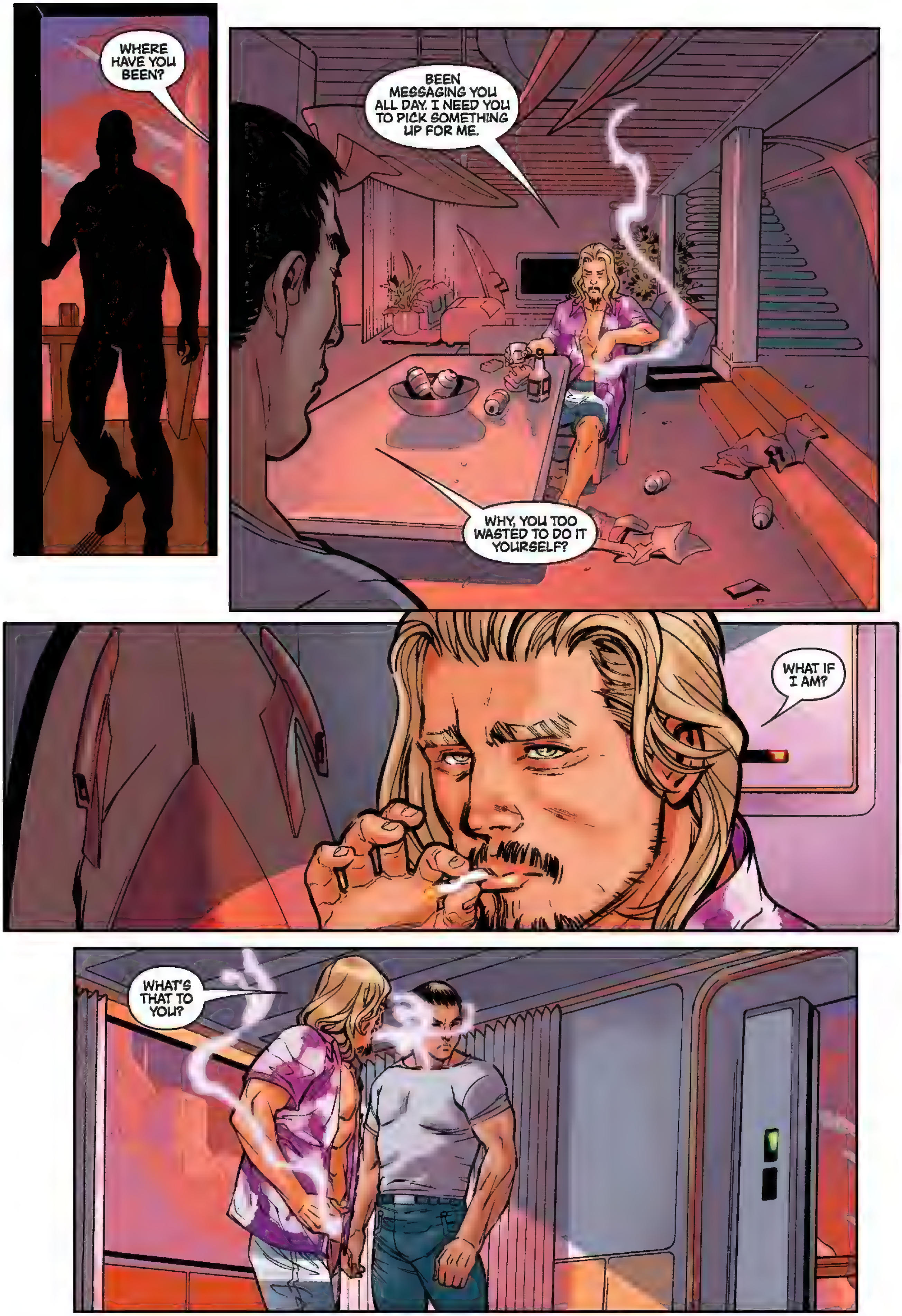

-- AND THOSE WHO HAVE MADE IT ARE DESPERATE TO FIND OUT NEWS OF THEIR LOVED ONES.
THEIR FAMILIES.

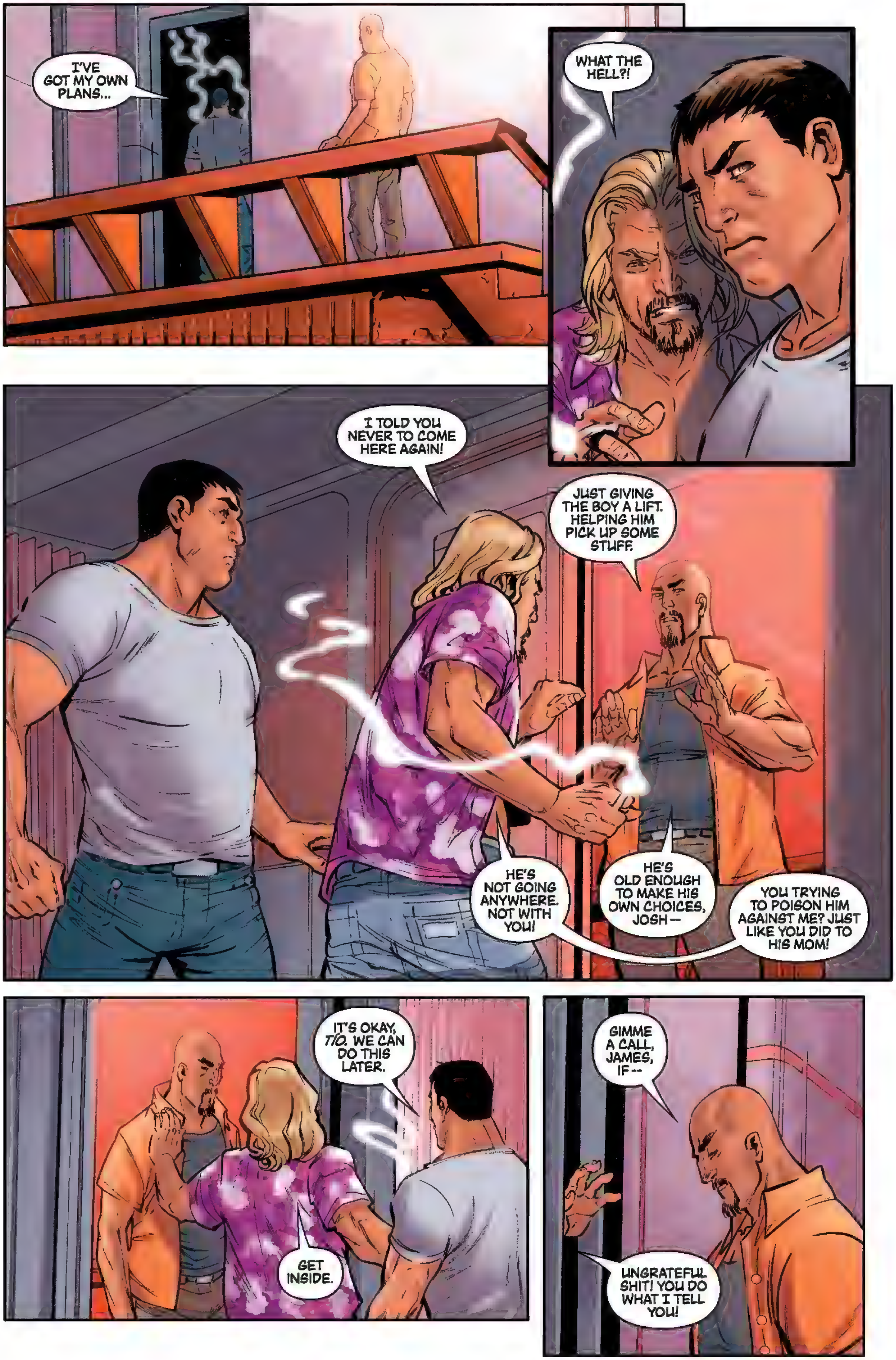

SORRY, MR. VEGA. THERE'S NOTHING.
NEITHER OF THEM?
NOTHING FOR EMILIO VEGA OR JOSH SANDERS. SORRY.
YOUR REQUEST WILL REMAIN ACTIVE. IF WE FIND ANYTHING, WE'LL POST IT ON THE TERMINALS.

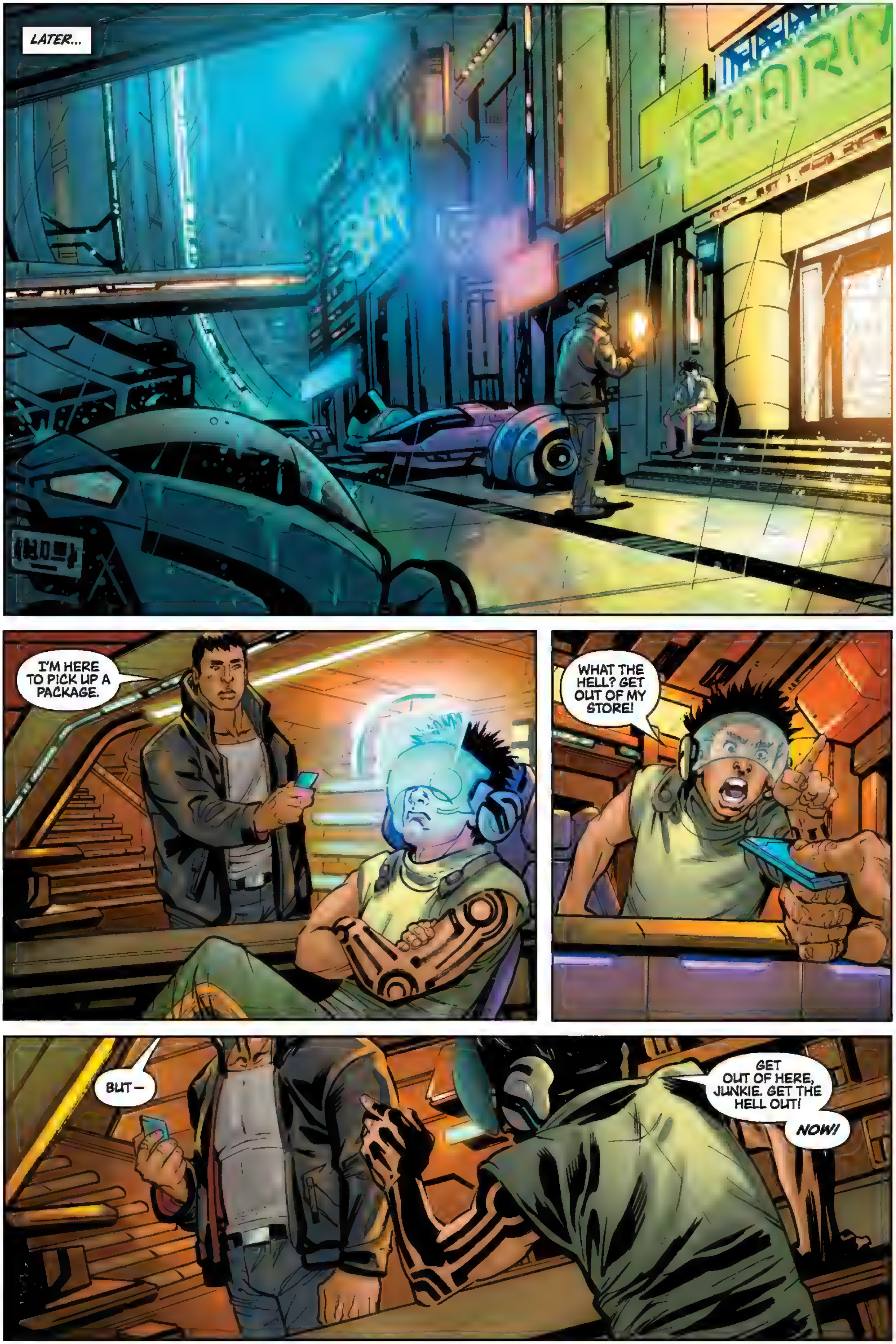

PLEASE PROVIDE IDENTIFICATION FOR VERIFICATION.

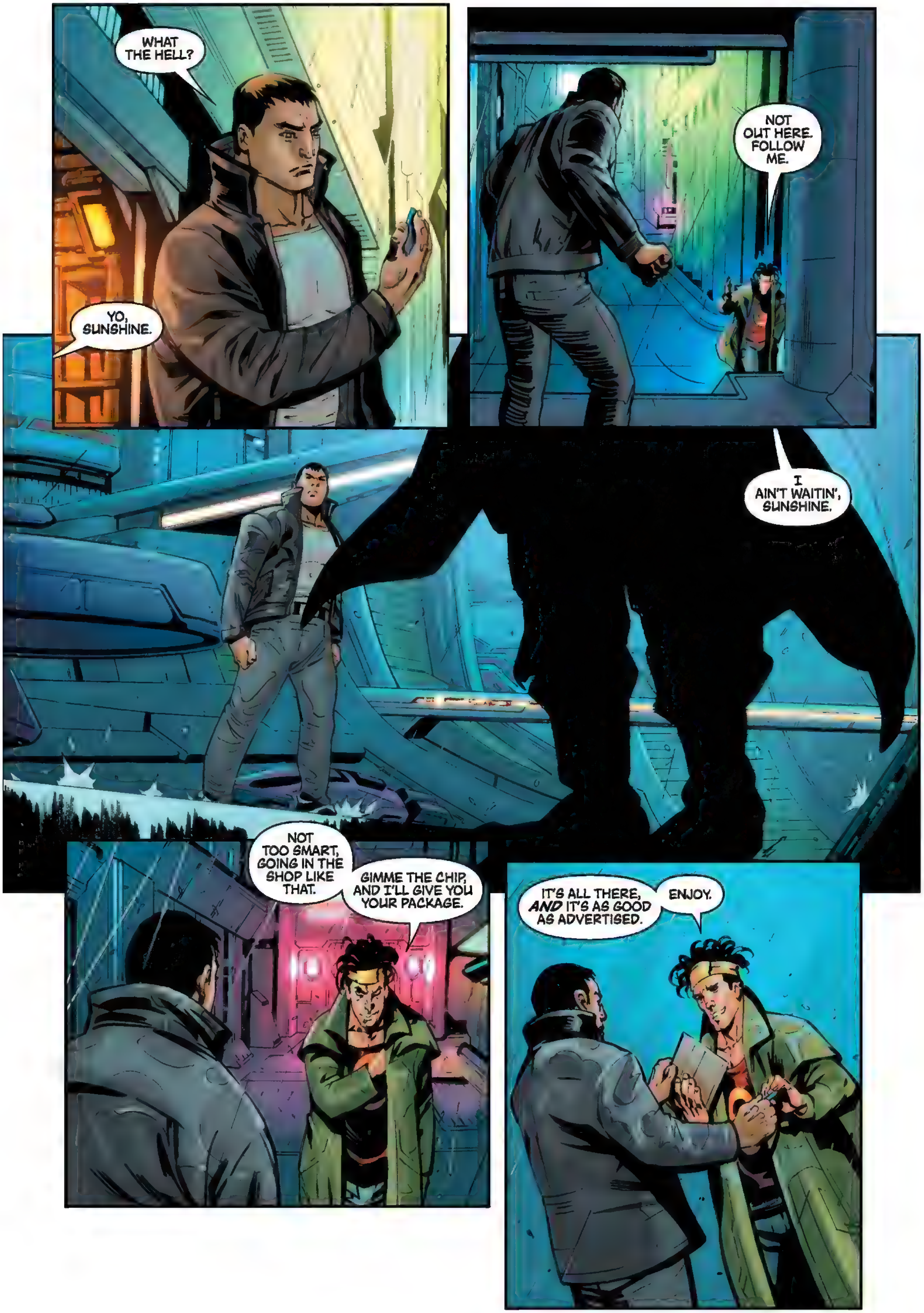

IDENTIFICATION CONFIRMED. RECRUITING STATUS: ACTIVE. WELCOME TO CAMP PENDLETON, JAMES VEGA.

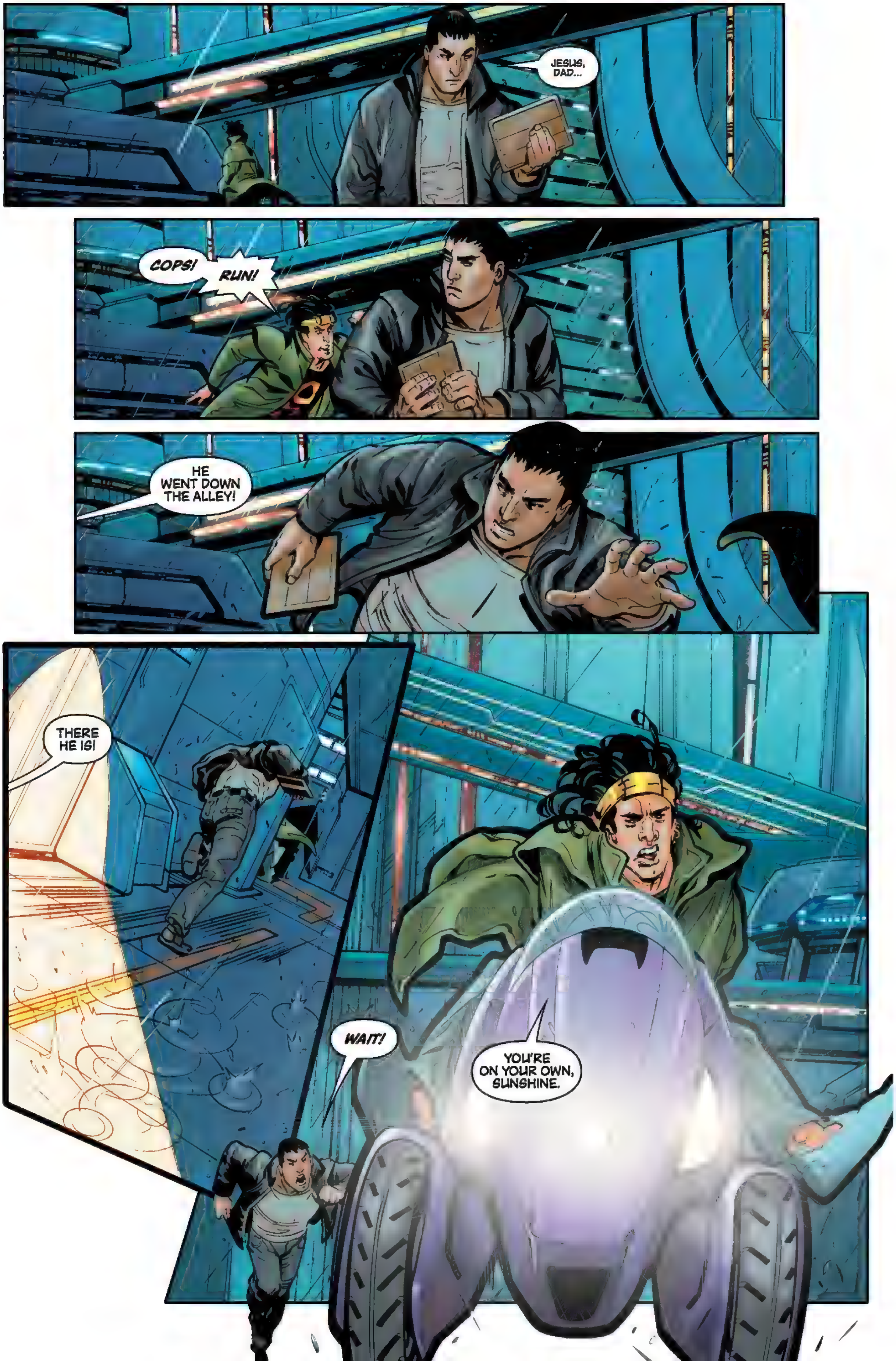

WELL, THAT'S A GOOD FIRST STEP.
POP'S GONNA BE PISSED.
YOU'VE GOT TO WALK YOUR OWN PATH, JAMES.
C'MON.
HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS?
THIRD AND FOURTH.
THERE'S WORSE THINGS THAN BEING A MARINE.
NOT IF YOU'RE HIM.

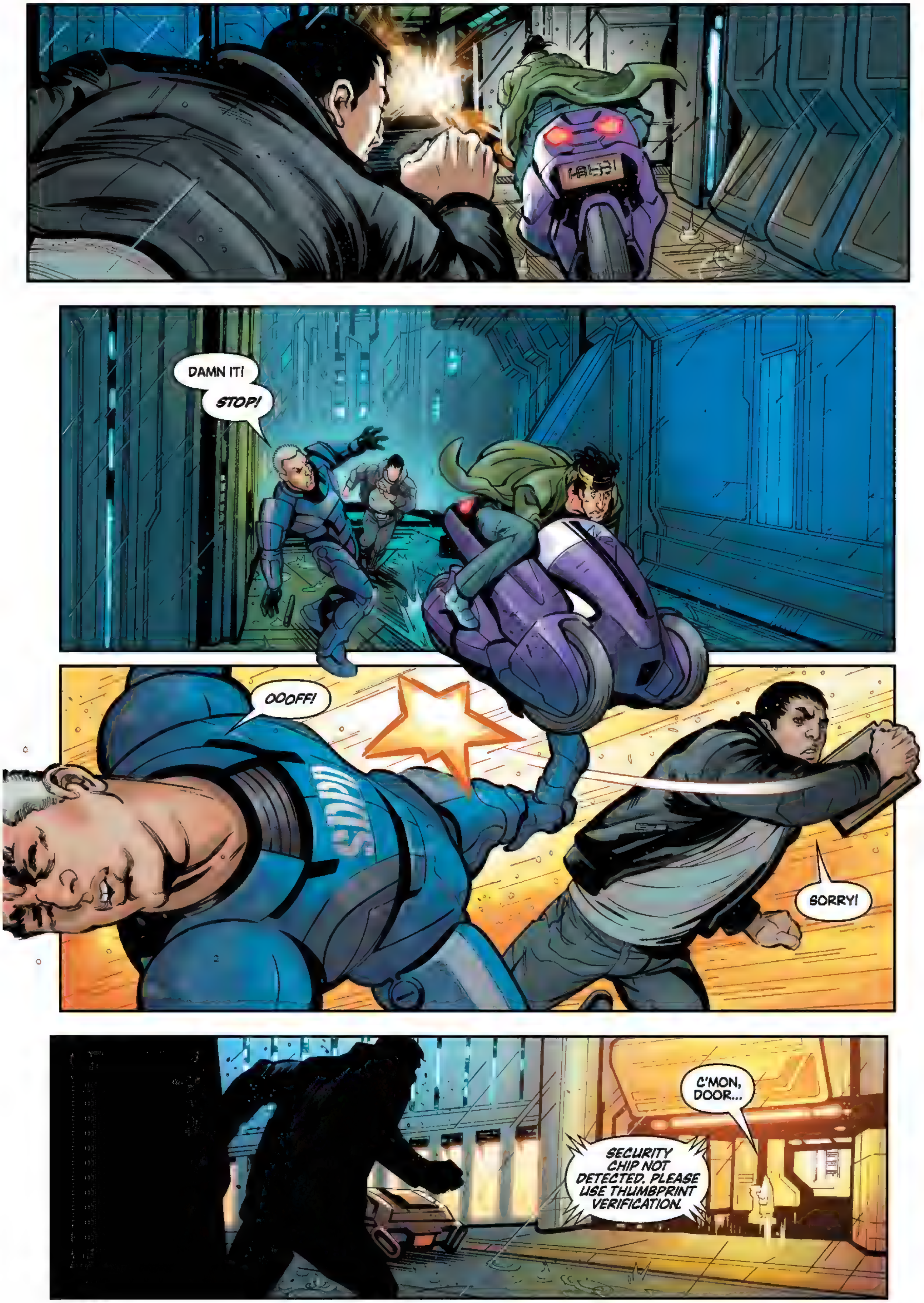

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
BEEN MESSAGING YOU ALL DAY. I NEED YOU TO PICK SOMETHING UP FOR ME.
WHY, YOU TOO WASTED TO DO IT YOURSELF?
WHAT IF I AM?
WHAT'S THAT TO YOU?

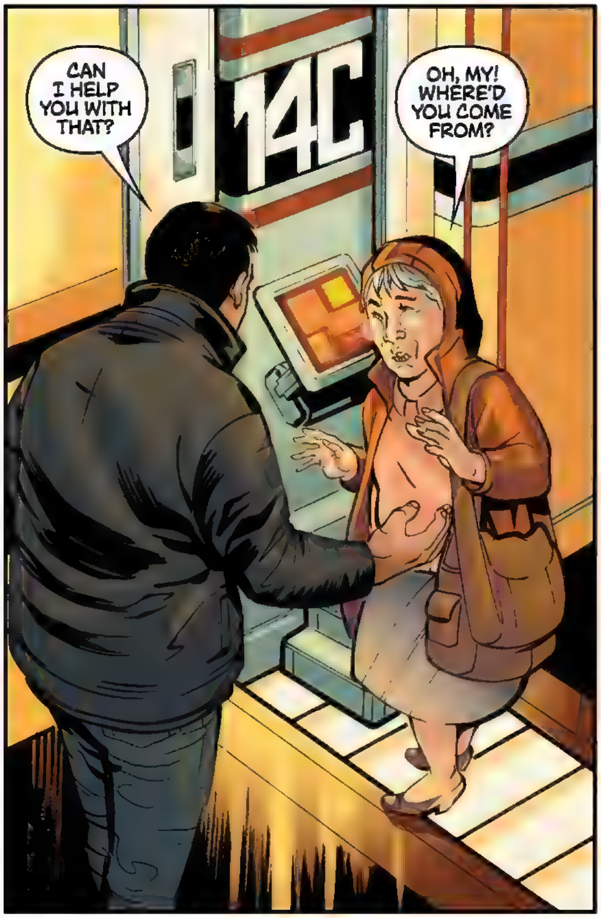

I'VE GOT MY OWN PLANS...
WHAT THE HELL?!
I TOLD YOU NEVER TO COME HERE AGAIN!
JUST GIVING THE BOY A LIFT. HELPING HIM PICK UP SOME STUFF.
HE'S NOT GOING ANYWHERE. NOT WITH YOU!
HE'S OLD ENOUGH TO MAKE HIS OWN CHOICES, JOSH--
YOU TRYING TO POISON HIM AGAINST ME? JUST LIKE YOU DID TO HIS MOM!
IT'S OKAY, *TÍO*. WE CAN DO THIS LATER.
GET INSIDE.
GIMME A CALL, JAMES, IF--
UNGRATEFUL SHIT! YOU DO WHAT I TELL YOU!

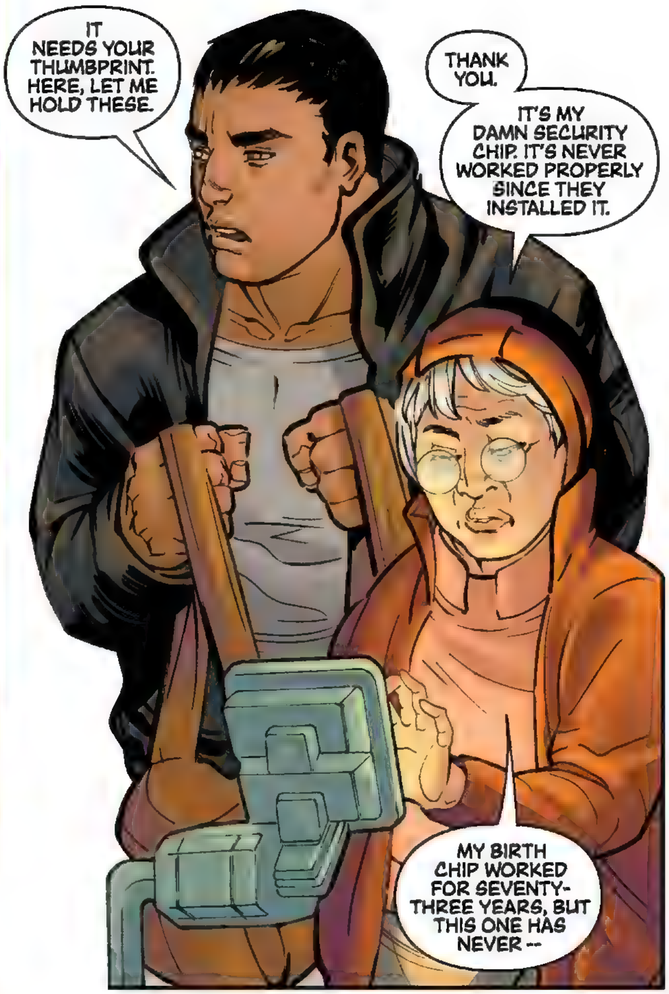

LATER...
PHARM
I'M HERE TO PICK UP A PACKAGE.
WHAT THE HELL? GET OUT OF MY STORE!
BUT—
GET OUT OF HERE, JUNKIE. GET THE HELL OUT!
NOW!

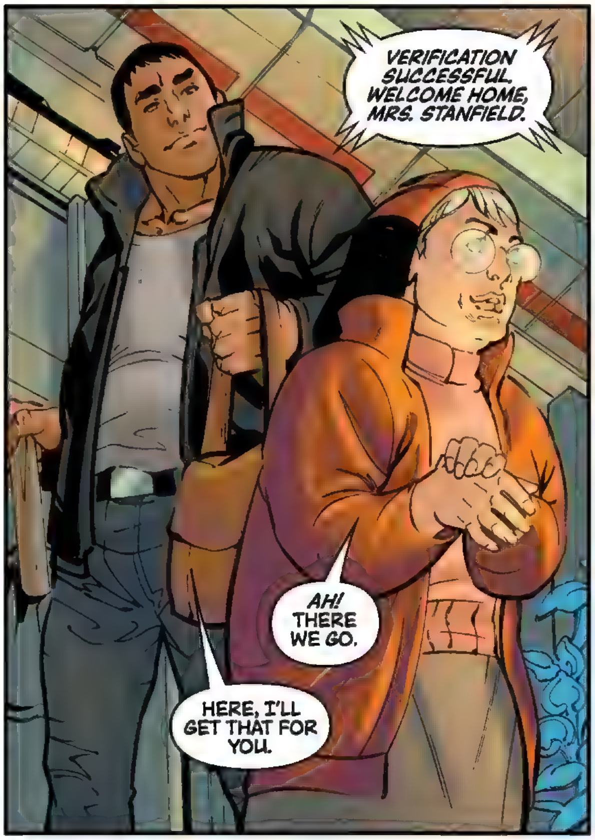

WHAT THE HELL?
YO, SUNSHINE.
NOT OUT HERE. FOLLOW ME.
I AIN'T WAITIN', SUNSHINE.
NOT TOO SMART, GOING IN THE SHOP LIKE THAT.
GIMME THE CHIP, AND I'LL GIVE YOU YOUR PACKAGE.
IT'S ALL THERE, *AND* IT'S AS GOOD AS ADVERTISED.
ENJOY.

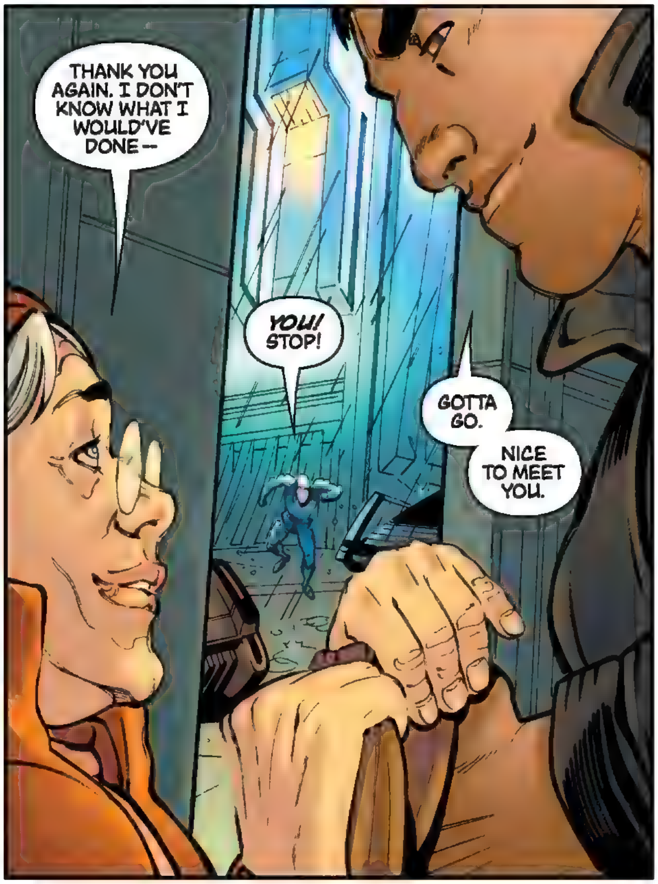

JESUS, DAD...
COPS!
RUN!
HE WENT DOWN THE ALLEY!
THERE HE IS!
WAIT!
YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN, SUNSHINE.

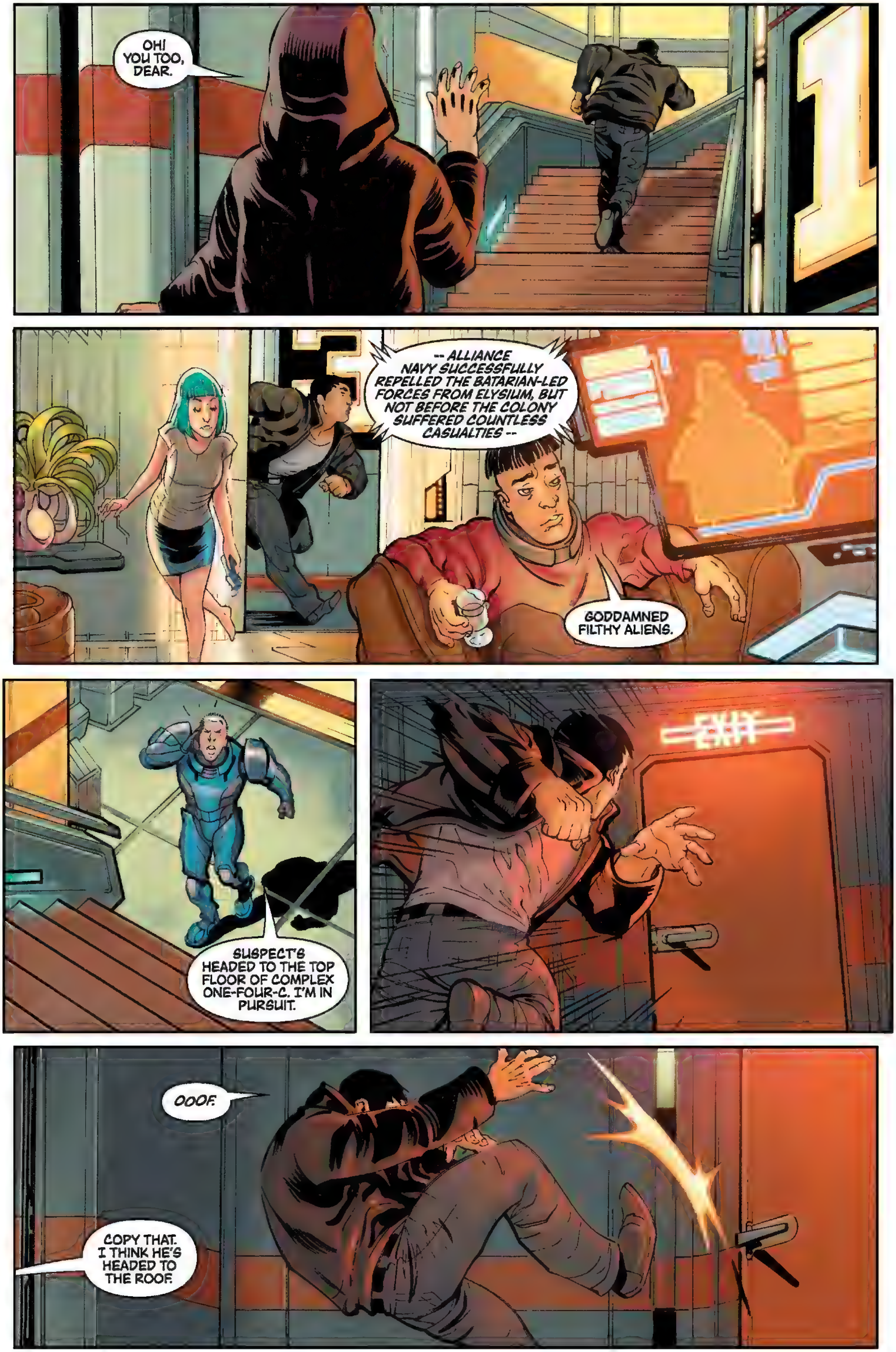

DAMN IT!
STOP!
OOOFF!
SORRY!
C'MON, DOOR...
SECURITY CHIP NOT DETECTED. PLEASE USE THUMBPRINT VERIFICATION.

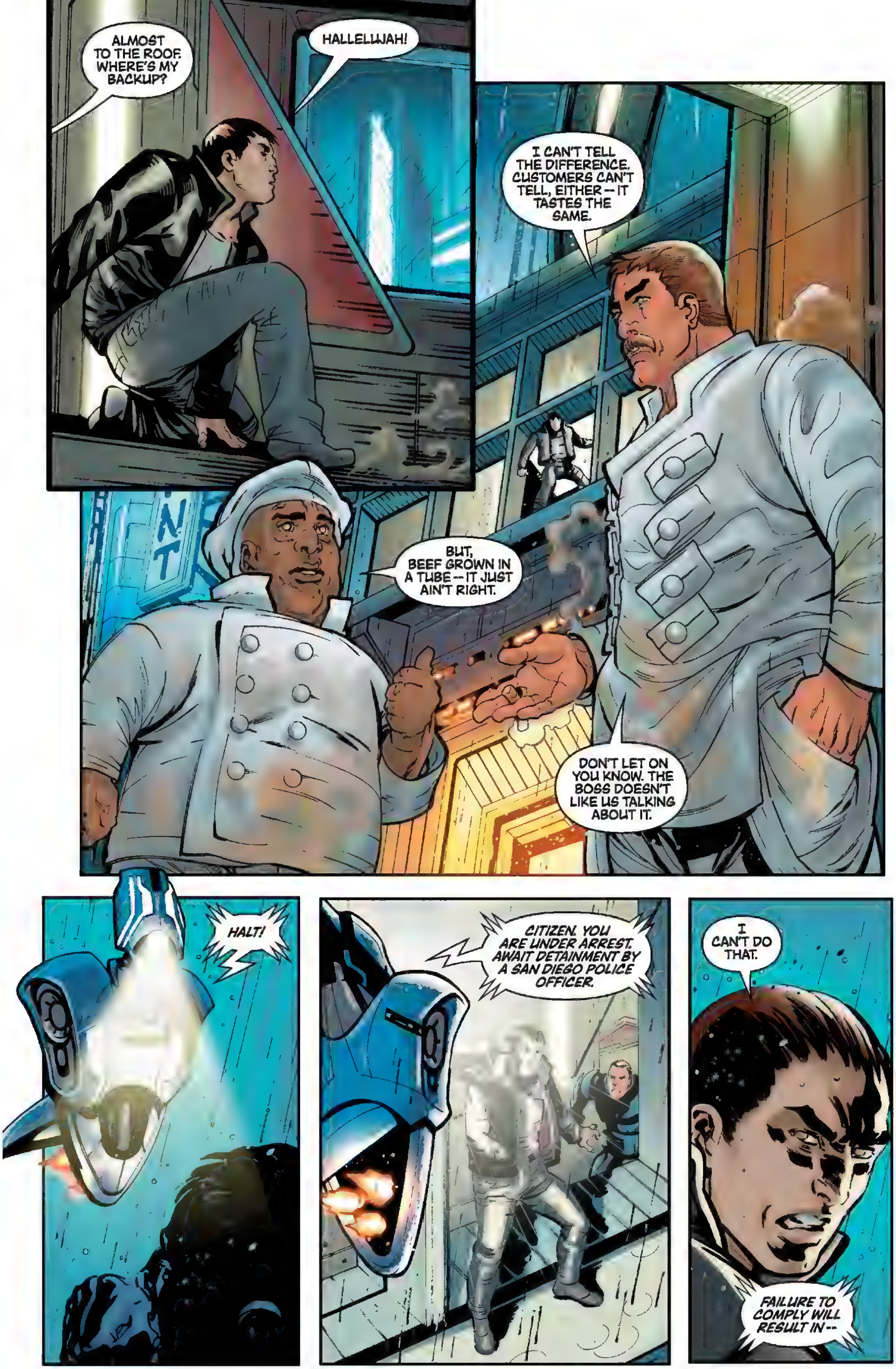

CAN I HELP YOU WITH THAT?
14C
OH, MY! WHERE'D YOU COME FROM?

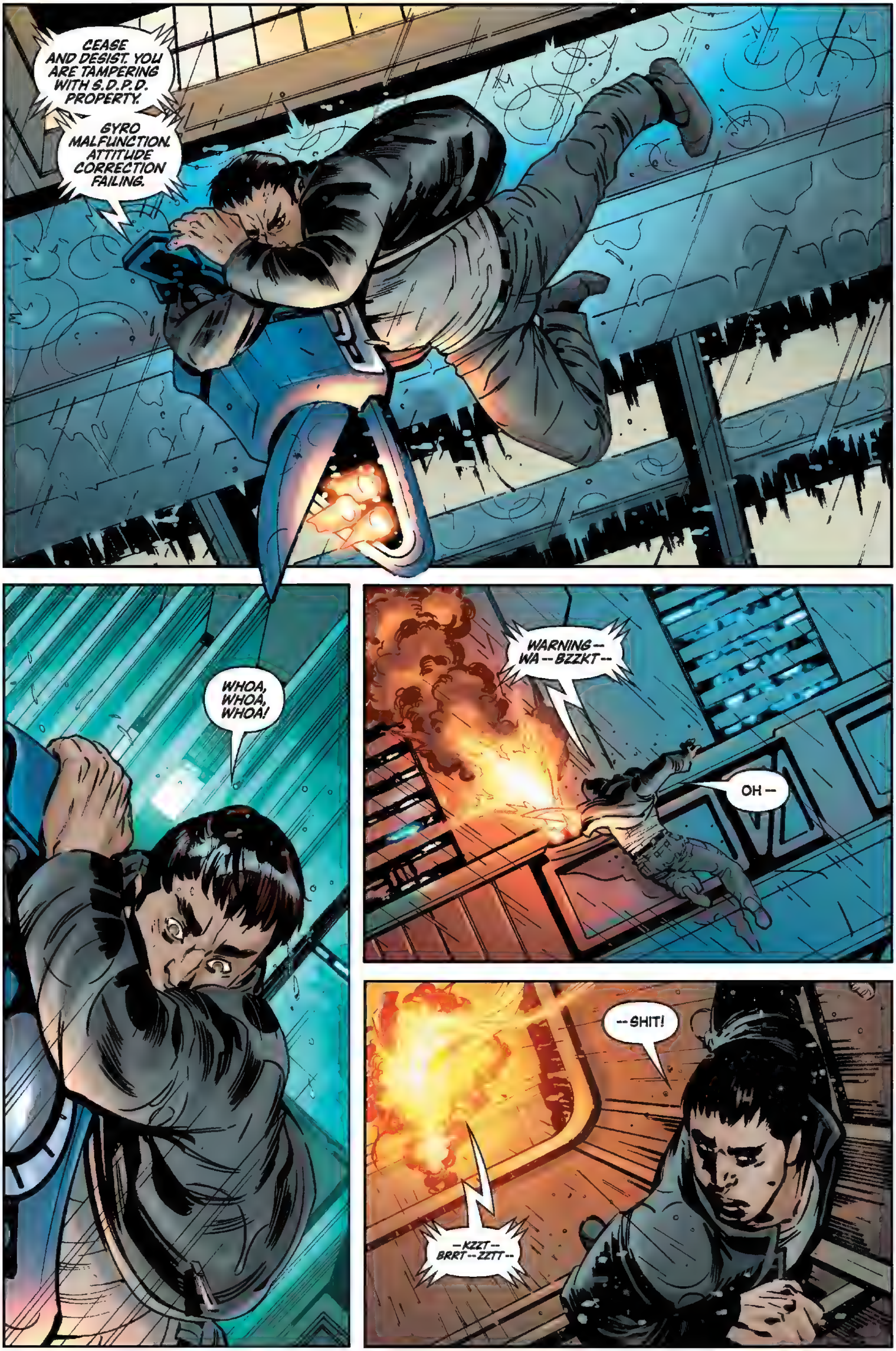

IT NEEDS YOUR THUMBPRINT. HERE, LET ME HOLD THESE.
THANK YOU.
IT'S MY DAMN SECURITY CHIP. IT'S NEVER WORKED PROPERLY SINCE THEY INSTALLED IT.
MY BIRTH CHIP WORKED FOR SEVENTY-THREE YEARS, BUT THIS ONE HAS NEVER --

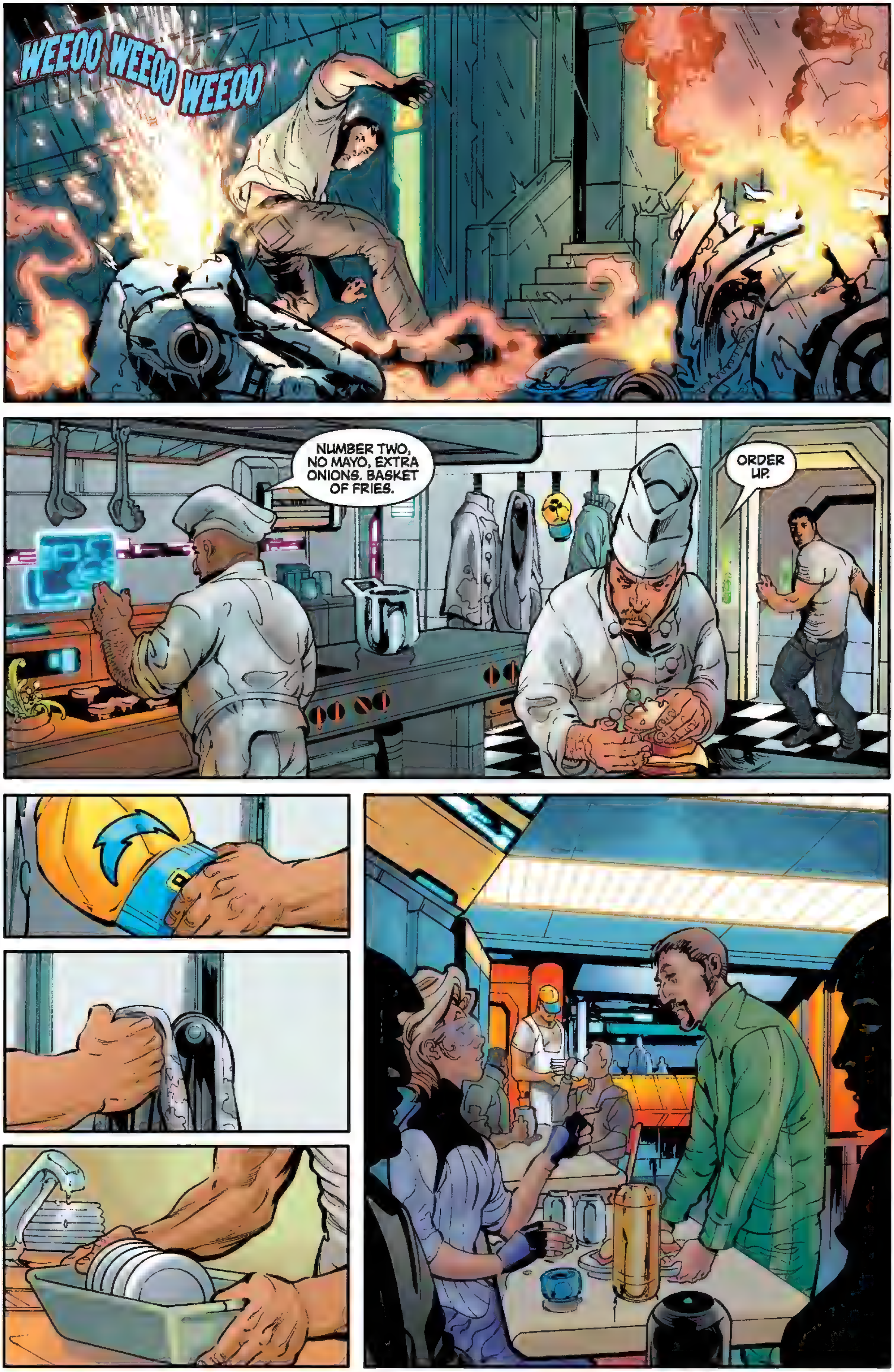

VERIFICATION SUCCESSFUL. WELCOME HOME, MRS. STANFIELD.
AH! THERE WE GO.
HERE, I'LL GET THAT FOR YOU.

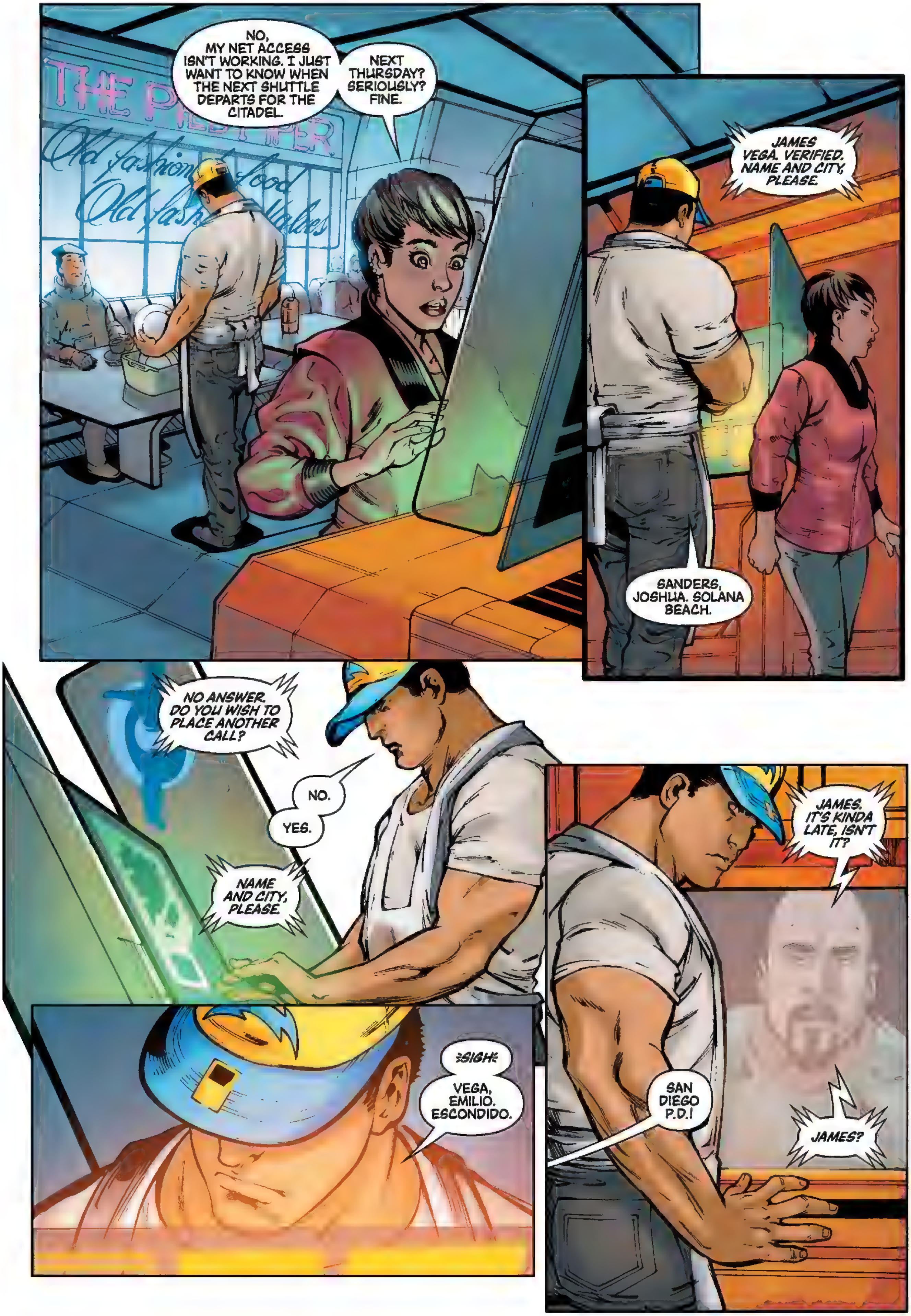

THANK YOU AGAIN. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WOULD'VE DONE --
YOU! STOP!
GOTTA GO.
NICE TO MEET YOU.

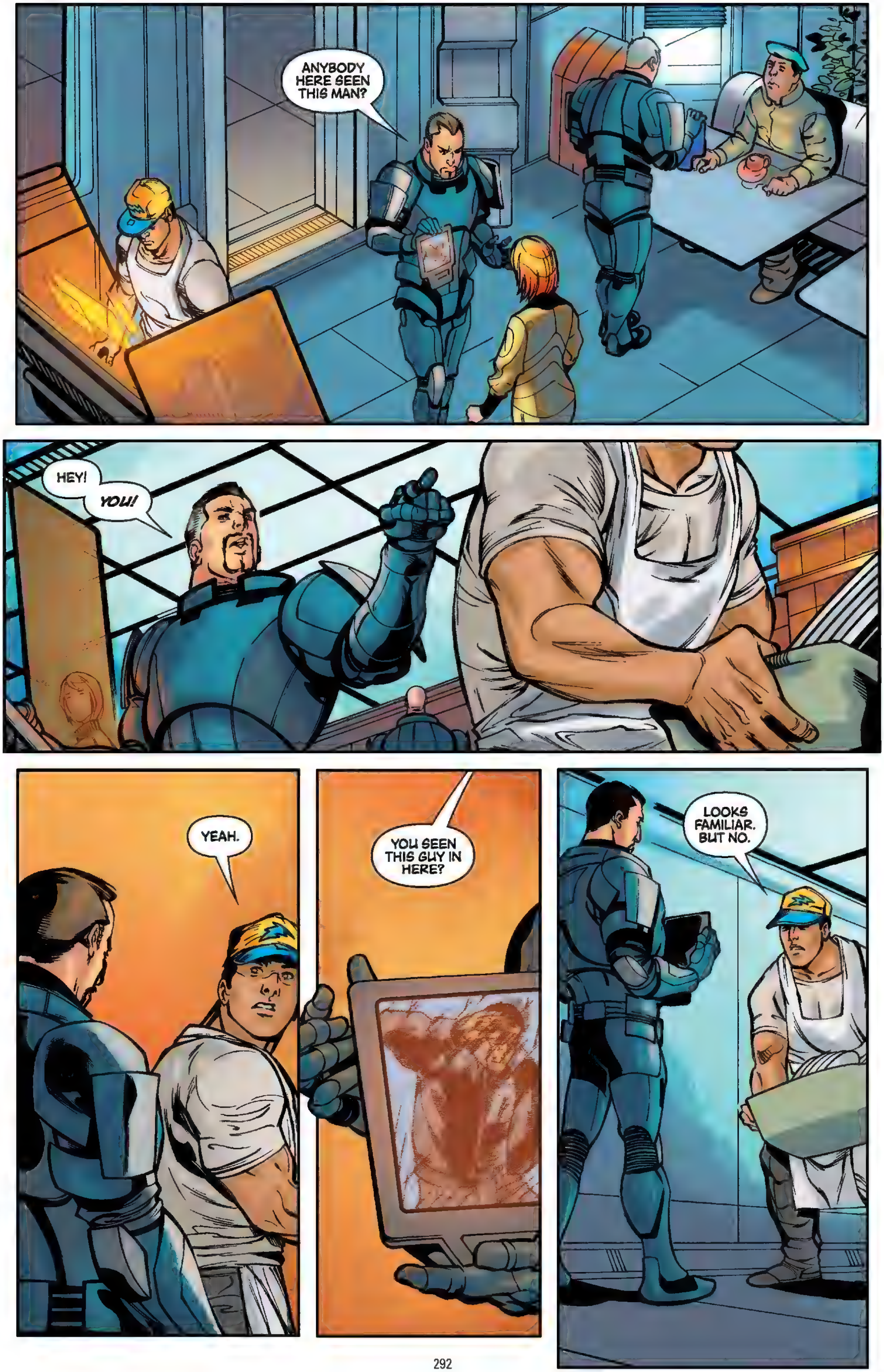

OH! YOU TOO, DEAR.
-- ALLIANCE NAVY SUCCESSFULLY REPELLED THE BATARIAN-LED FORCES FROM ELYSIUM, BUT NOT BEFORE THE COLONY SUFFERED COUNTLESS CASUALTIES --
GODDAMNED FILTHY ALIENS.
SUSPECT'S HEADED TO THE TOP FLOOR OF COMPLEX ONE-FOUR-C. I'M IN PURSUIT.
EXIT
OOOF.
COPY THAT. I THINK HE'S HEADED TO THE ROOF.

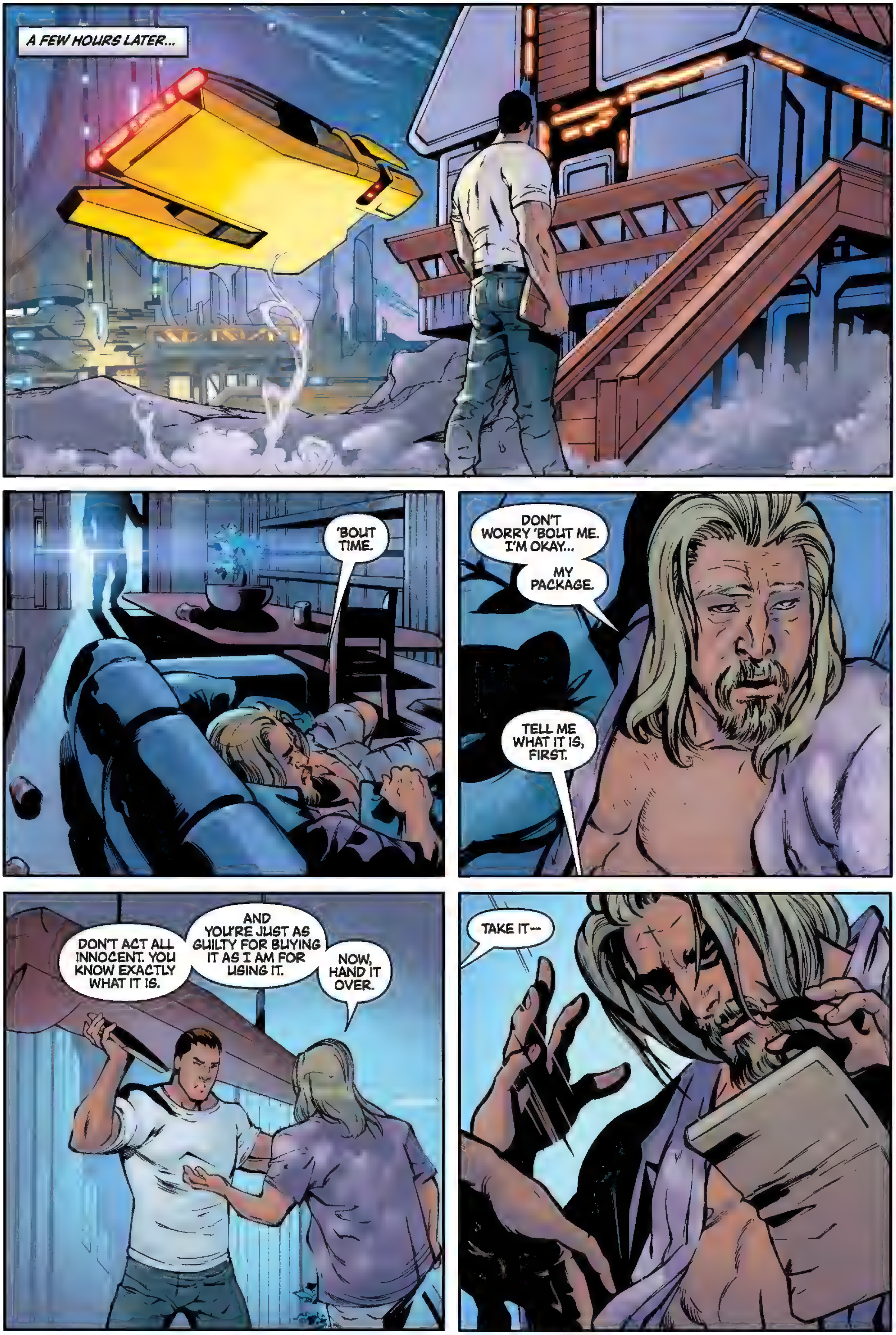

ALMOST TO THE ROOF. WHERE'S MY BACKUP?
HALLELUJAH!
I CAN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE. CUSTOMERS CAN'T TELL, EITHER -- IT TASTES THE SAME.
BUT, BEEF GROWN IN A TUBE -- IT JUST AIN'T RIGHT.
DON'T LET ON YOU KNOW. THE BOSS DOESN'T LIKE US TALKING ABOUT IT.
HALT!
CITIZEN. YOU ARE UNDER ARREST. AWAIT DETAINMENT BY A SAN DIEGO POLICE OFFICER.
I CAN'T DO THAT.
FAILURE TO COMPLY WILL RESULT IN --

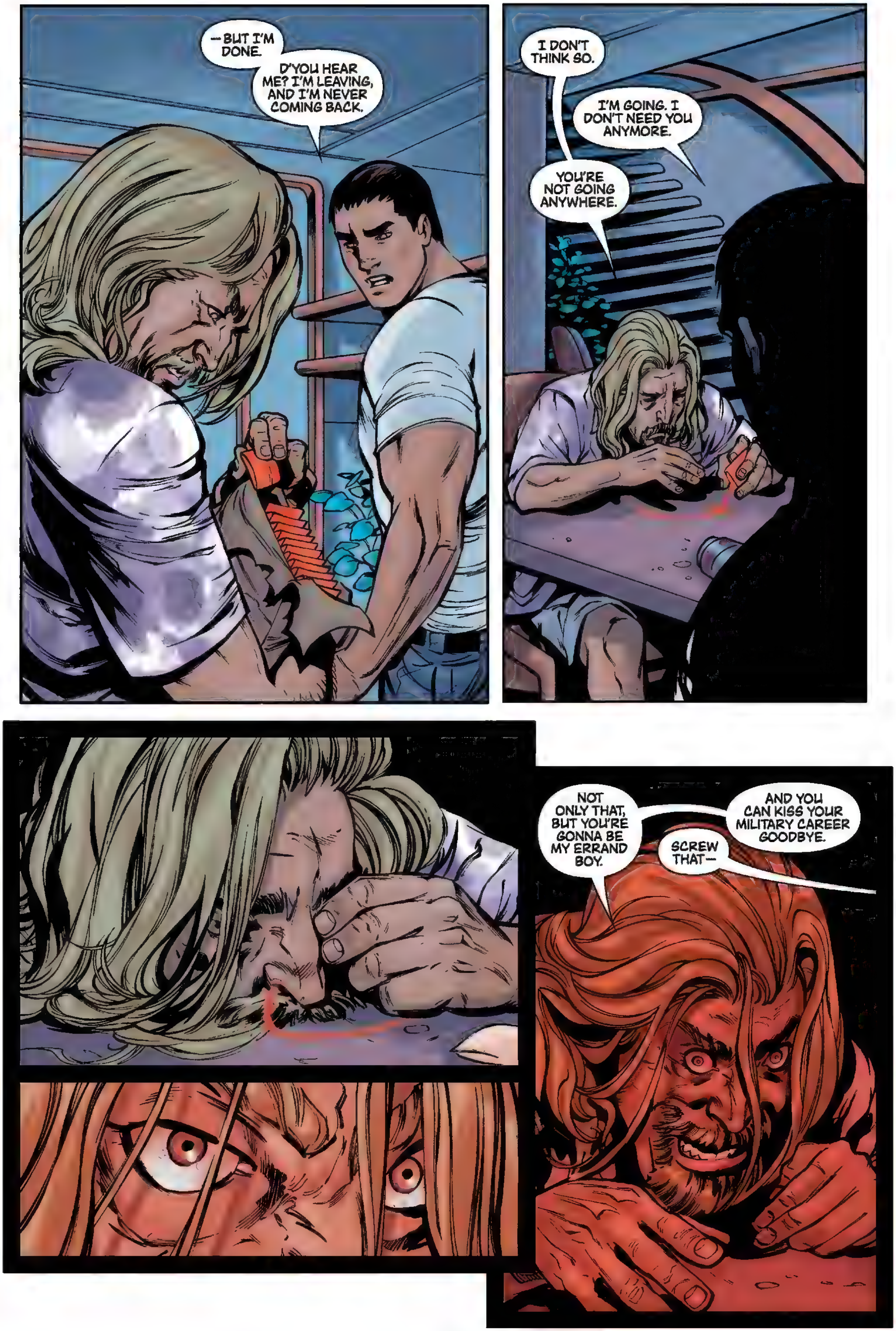

CEASE AND DESIST. YOU ARE TAMPERING WITH S.D.P.D. PROPERTY.
GYRO MALFUNCTION. ATTITUDE CORRECTION FAILING.
WHOA, WHOA, WHOA!
WARNING-- WA--BZZKT--
OH--
--SHIT!
--KZZT-- BRRT--ZZTT--

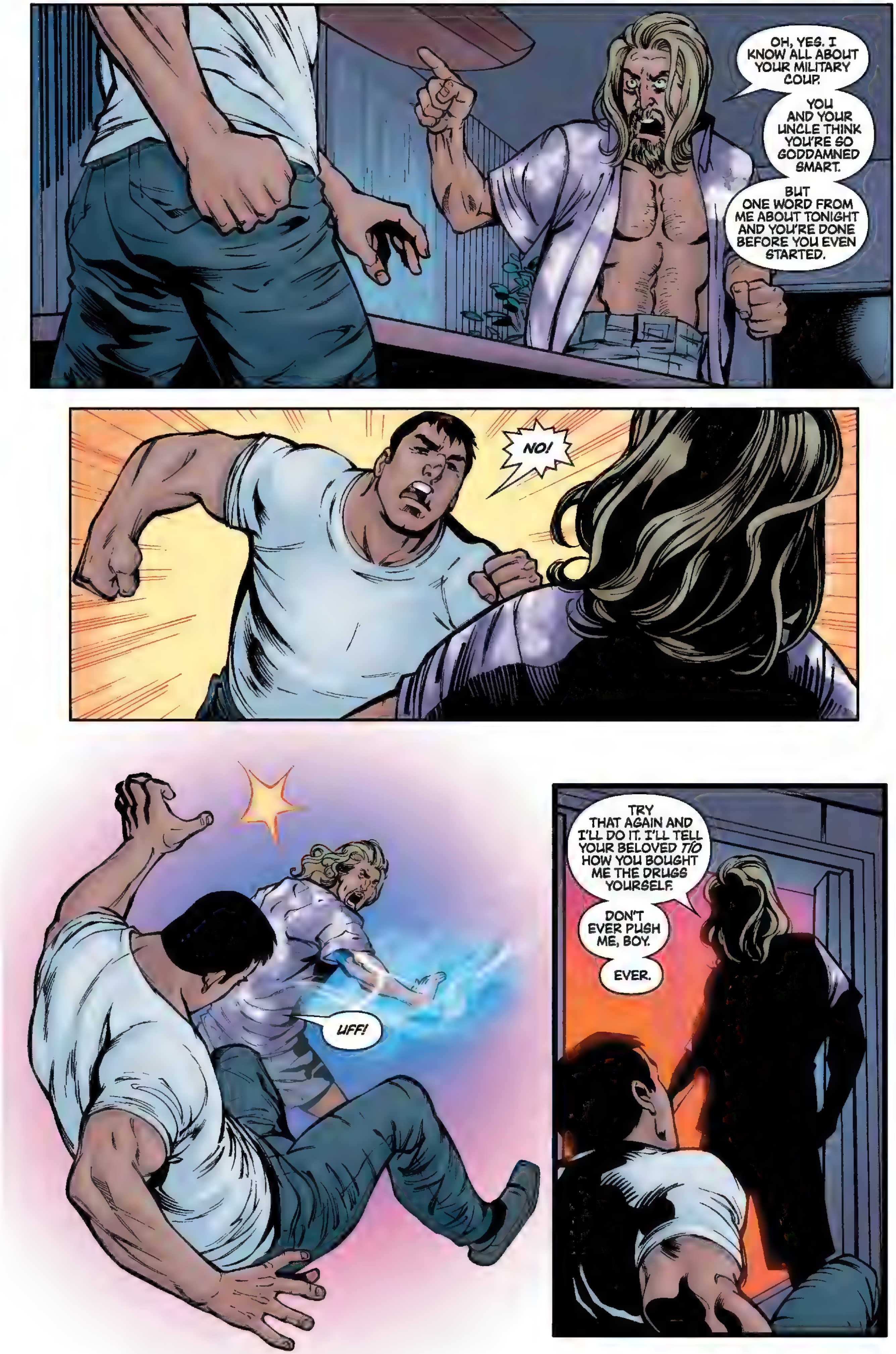

WEEOO WEEOO WEEOO
NUMBER TWO, NO MAYO, EXTRA ONIONS. BASKET OF FRIES.
ORDER UP.

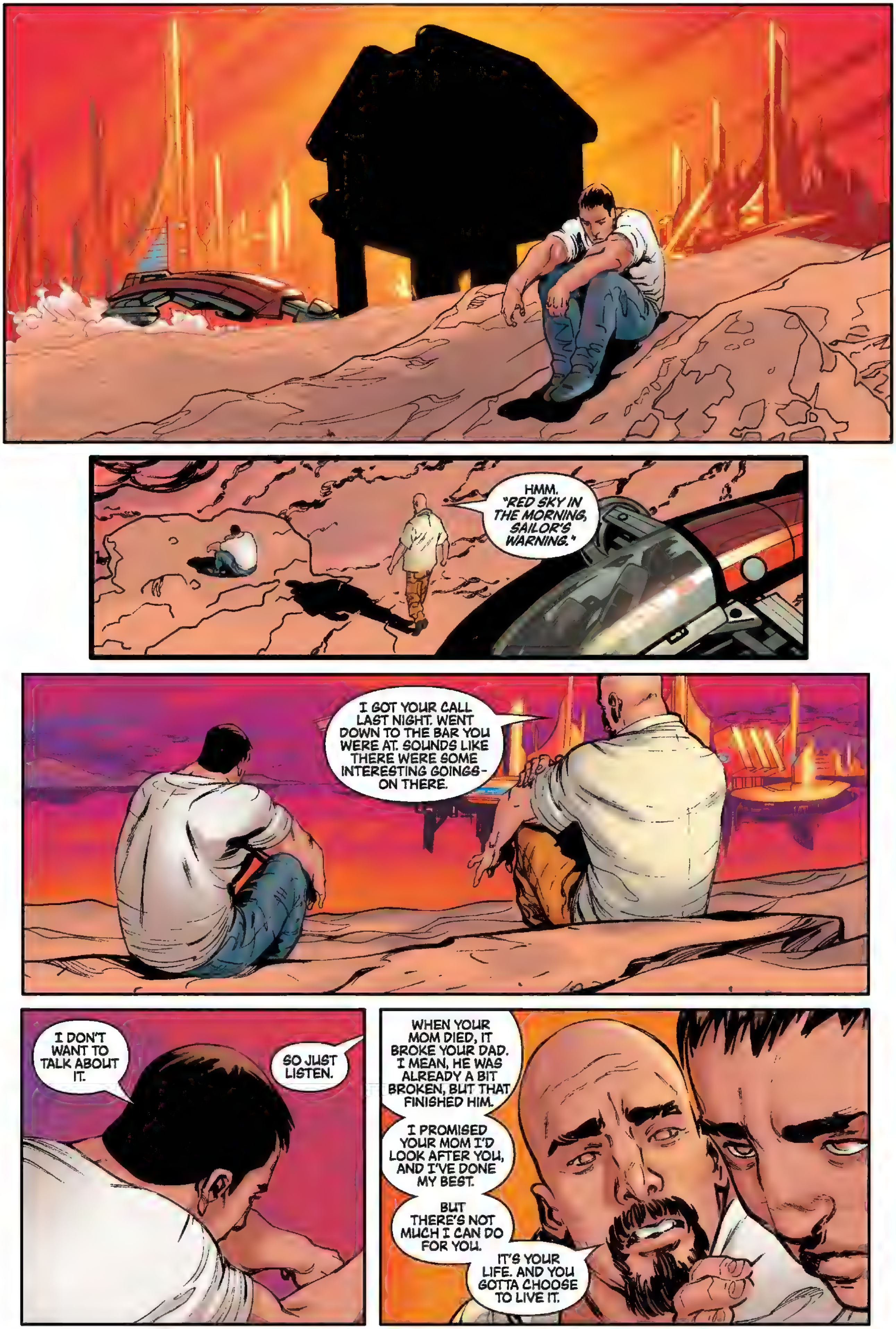

NO, MY NET ACCESS ISN'T WORKING. I JUST WANT TO KNOW WHEN THE NEXT SHUTTLE DEPARTS FOR THE CITADEL.
NEXT THURSDAY? SERIOUSLY? FINE.
JAMES VEGA. VERIFIED. NAME AND CITY, PLEASE.
SANDERS, JOSHUA. SOLANA BEACH.
NO ANSWER. DO YOU WISH TO PLACE ANOTHER CALL?
NO.
YES.
NAME AND CITY, PLEASE.
SIGH
VEGA, EMILIO. ESCONDIDO.
JAMES, IT'S KINDA LATE, ISN'T IT?
SAN DIEGO P.D.!
JAMES?

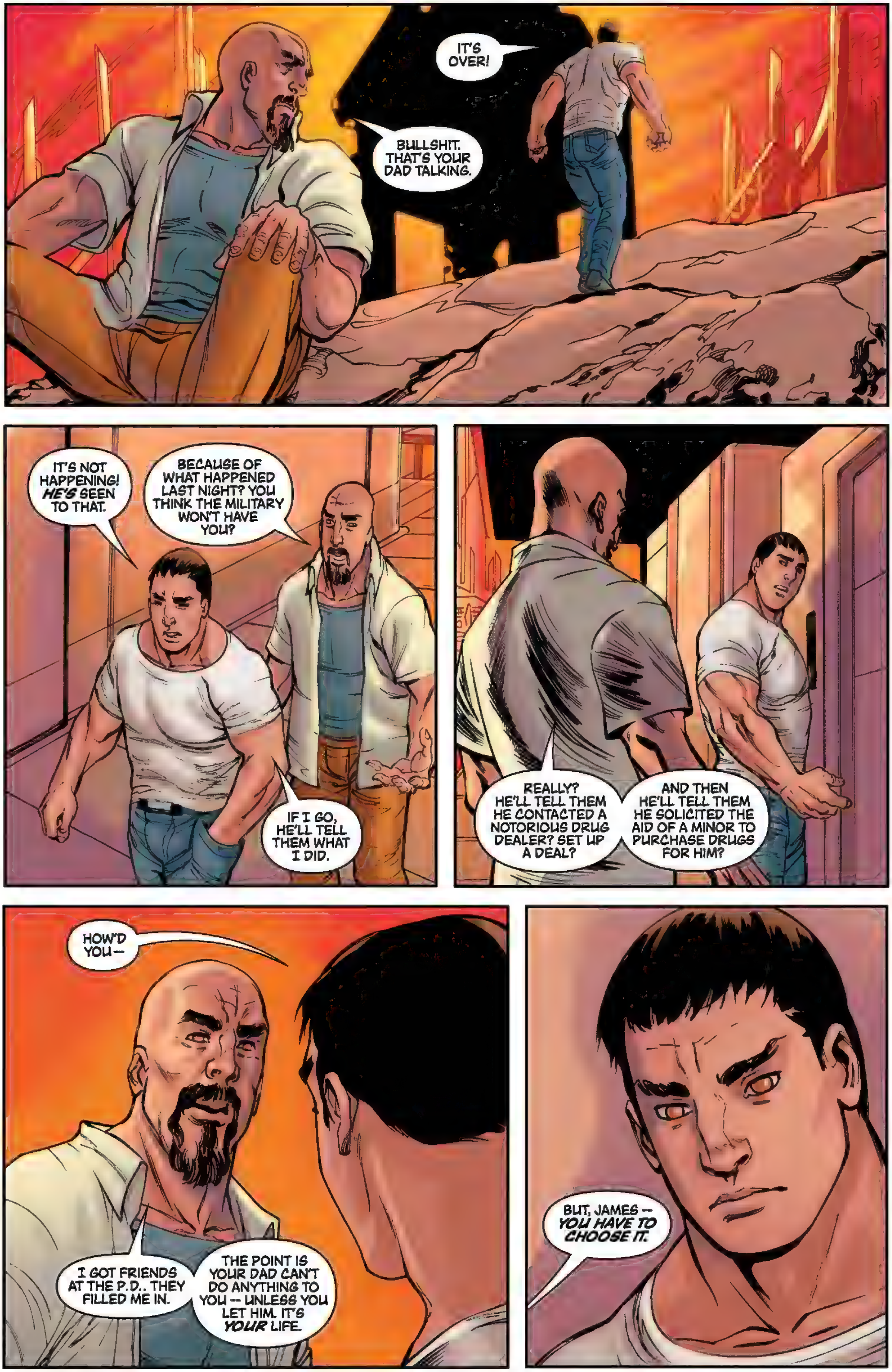

ANYBODY HERE SEEN THIS MAN?
HEY!
YOU!
YEAH.
YOU SEEN THIS GUY IN HERE?
LOOKS FAMILIAR. BUT NO.


A FEW HOURS LATER...
'BOUT TIME.
DON'T WORRY 'BOUT ME. I'M OKAY...
MY PACKAGE.
TELL ME WHAT IT IS, FIRST.
DON'T ACT ALL INNOCENT. YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT IT IS.
AND YOU'RE JUST AS GUILTY FOR BUYING IT AS I AM FOR USING IT.
NOW, HAND IT OVER.
TAKE IT--


—BUT I'M DONE.
D'YOU HEAR ME? I'M LEAVING, AND I'M NEVER COMING BACK.
I DON'T THINK SO.
I'M GOING. I DON'T NEED YOU ANYMORE.
YOU'RE NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
NOT ONLY THAT, BUT YOU'RE GONNA BE MY ERRAND BOY.
AND YOU CAN KISS YOUR MILITARY CAREER GOODBYE.
SCREW THAT—


OH, YES. I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOUR MILITARY COUP.
YOU AND YOUR UNCLE THINK YOU'RE SO GODDAMNED SMART.
BUT ONE WORD FROM ME ABOUT TONIGHT AND YOU'RE DONE BEFORE YOU EVEN STARTED.
NO!
UFF!
TRY THAT AGAIN AND I'LL DO IT. I'LL TELL YOUR BELOVED *TÍO* HOW YOU BOUGHT ME THE DRUGS YOURSELF.
DON'T EVER PUSH ME, BOY.
EVER.


HMM. *"RED SKY IN THE MORNING, SAILOR'S WARNING."*
I GOT YOUR CALL LAST NIGHT. WENT DOWN TO THE BAR YOU WERE AT. SOUNDS LIKE THERE WERE SOME INTERESTING GOINGS-ON THERE.
I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT.
SO JUST LISTEN.
WHEN YOUR MOM DIED, IT BROKE YOUR DAD. I MEAN, HE WAS ALREADY A BIT BROKEN, BUT THAT FINISHED HIM.
I PROMISED YOUR MOM I'D LOOK AFTER YOU, AND I'VE DONE MY BEST.
BUT THERE'S NOT MUCH I CAN DO FOR YOU.
IT'S YOUR LIFE. AND YOU GOTTA CHOOSE TO LIVE IT.


IT'S OVER!
BULLSHIT. THAT'S YOUR DAD TALKING.
IT'S NOT HAPPENING! *HE'S* SEEN TO THAT.
BECAUSE OF WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT? YOU THINK THE MILITARY WON'T HAVE YOU?
IF I GO, HE'LL TELL THEM WHAT I DID.
REALLY? HE'LL TELL THEM HE CONTACTED A NOTORIOUS DRUG DEALER? SET UP A DEAL?
AND THEN HE'LL TELL THEM HE SOLICITED THE AID OF A MINOR TO PURCHASE DRUGS FOR HIM?
HOW'D YOU --
I GOT FRIENDS AT THE P.D.. THEY FILLED ME IN.
THE POINT IS YOUR DAD CAN'T DO ANYTHING TO YOU -- UNLESS YOU LET HIM. IT'S *YOUR* LIFE.
BUT, JAMES -- *YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE IT.*

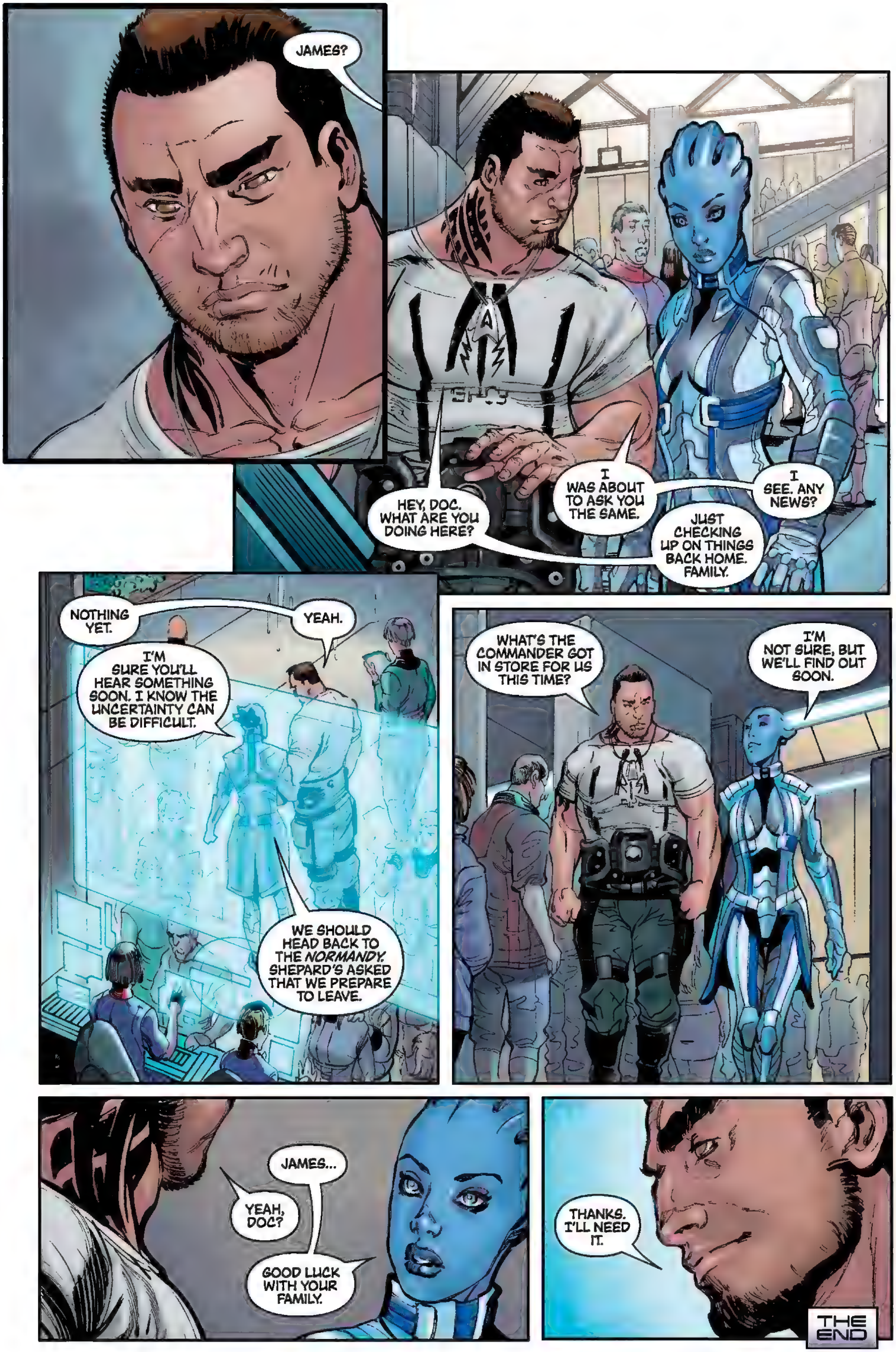

JAMES?
HEY, DOC. WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
JUST CHECKING UP ON THINGS BACK HOME. FAMILY.
I WAS ABOUT TO ASK YOU THE SAME.
I SEE. ANY NEWS?
NOTHING YET.
YEAH.
I'M SURE YOU'LL HEAR SOMETHING SOON. I KNOW THE UNCERTAINTY CAN BE DIFFICULT.
WE SHOULD HEAD BACK TO THE *NORMANDY.* SHEPARD'S ASKED THAT WE PREPARE TO LEAVE.
WHAT'S THE COMMANDER GOT IN STORE FOR US THIS TIME?
I'M NOT SURE, BUT WE'LL FIND OUT SOON.
JAMES...
YEAH, DOC?
GOOD LUCK WITH YOUR FAMILY.
THANKS. I'LL NEED IT.
THE END

Illustration by Anthony Palumbo

HOMEWORLDS

TALI'ZORAH NAR RAYYA

STORY
Mac Walters and Patrick Weekes

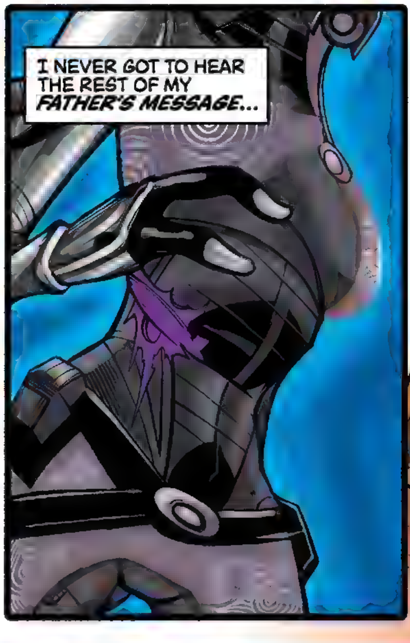
SCRIPT
Jeremy Barlow

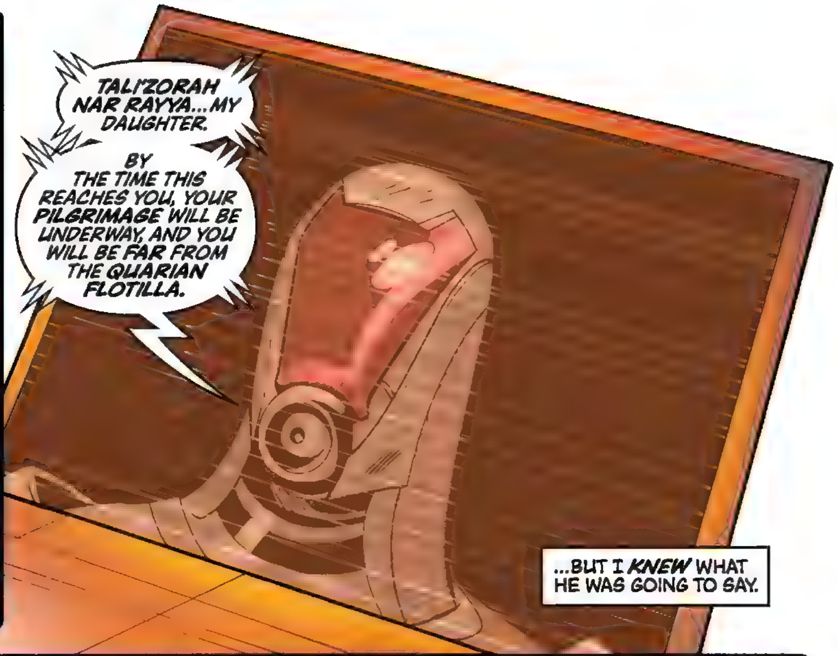
PENCILS
Chris Staggs

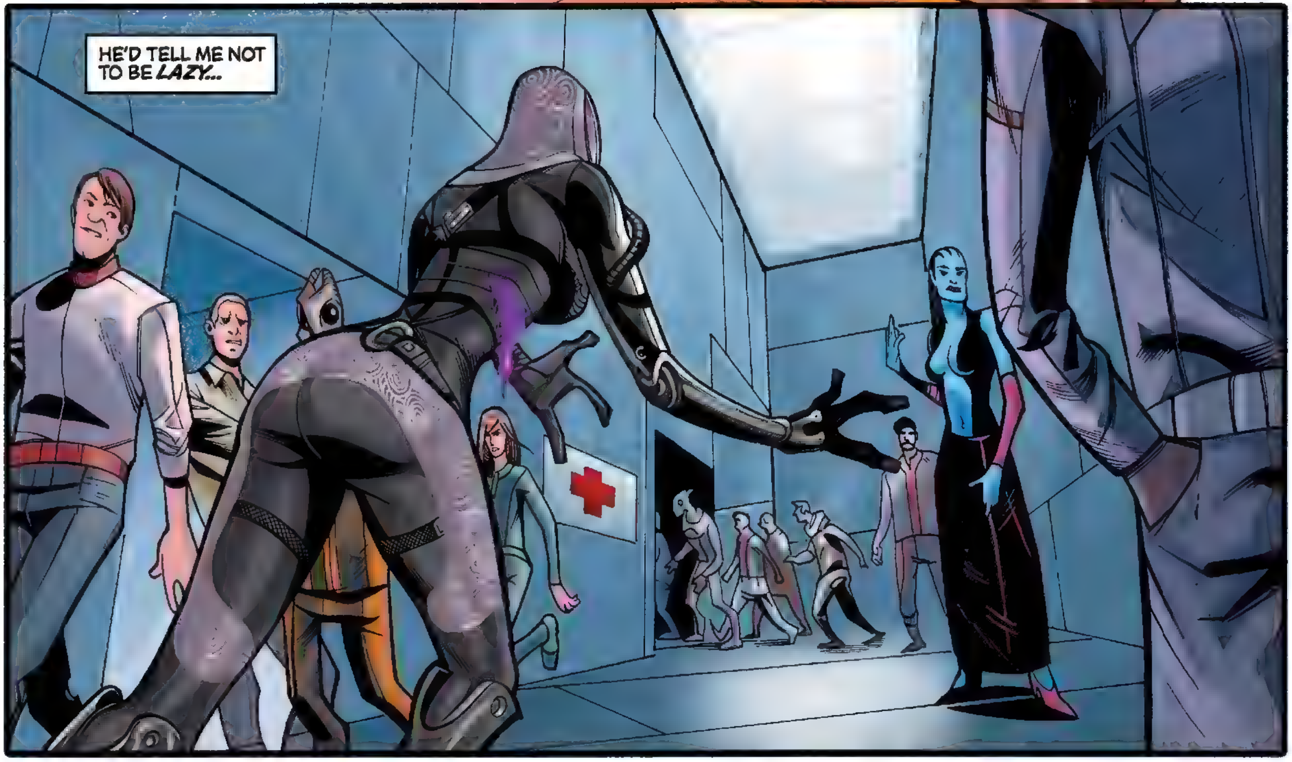
INKS
Marc Deering and Chris Staggs

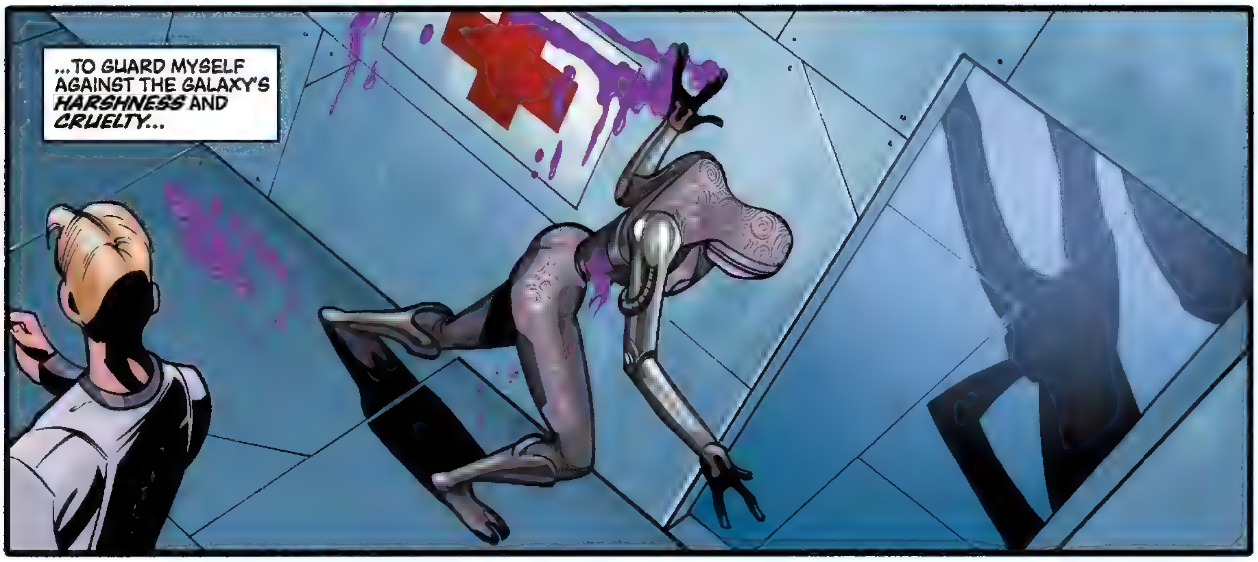
COLORS
Michael Atiyeh

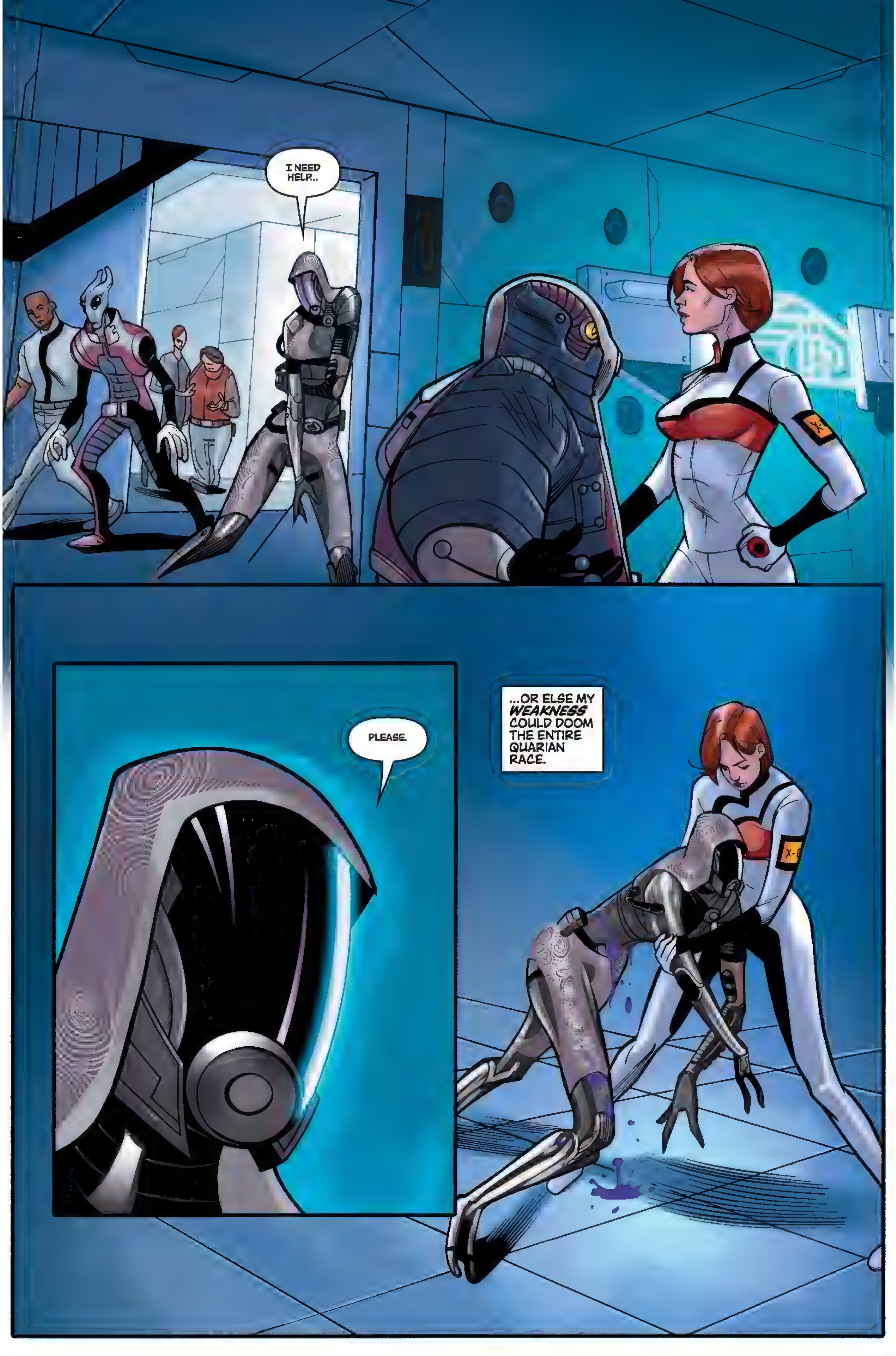
LETTERING
Michael Heisler

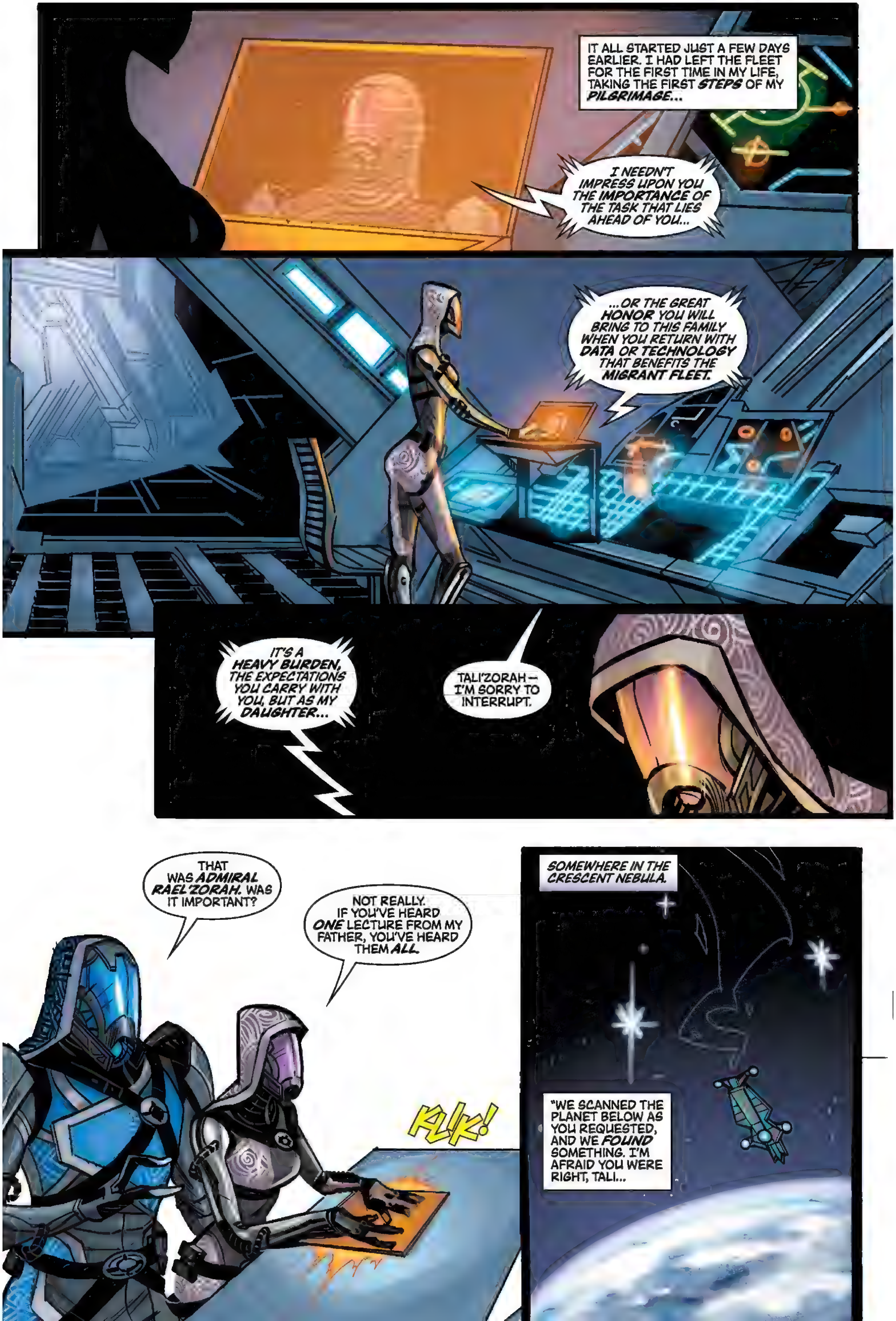

I NEVER GOT TO HEAR THE REST OF MY ***FATHER'S MESSAGE...***

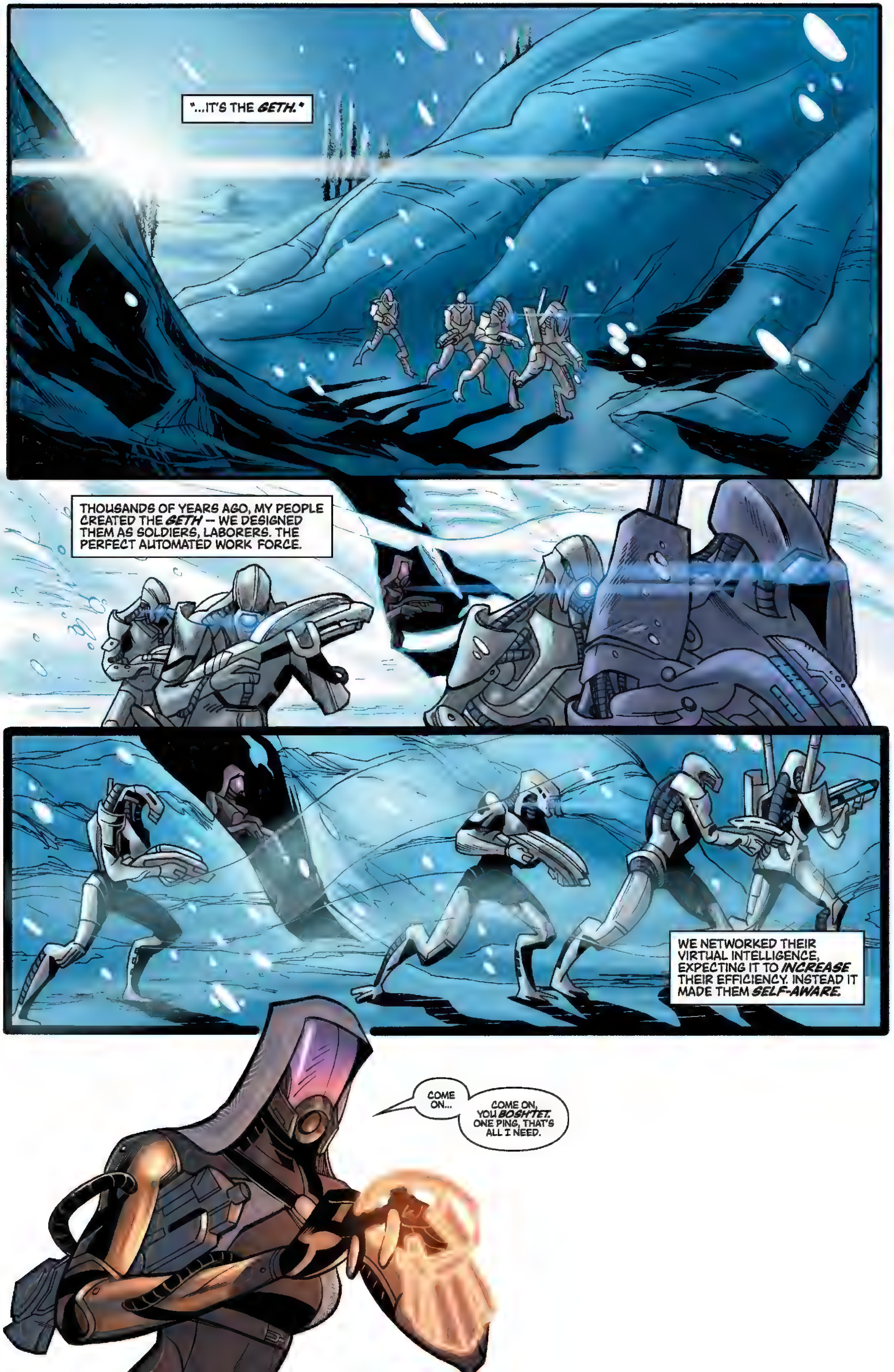

TALI'ZORAH NAR RAYYA...MY DAUGHTER.
BY THE TIME THIS REACHES YOU, YOUR ***PILGRIMAGE*** WILL BE UNDERWAY, AND YOU WILL BE ***FAR*** FROM THE ***QUARIAN FLOTILLA.***
...BUT I ***KNEW*** WHAT HE WAS GOING TO SAY.

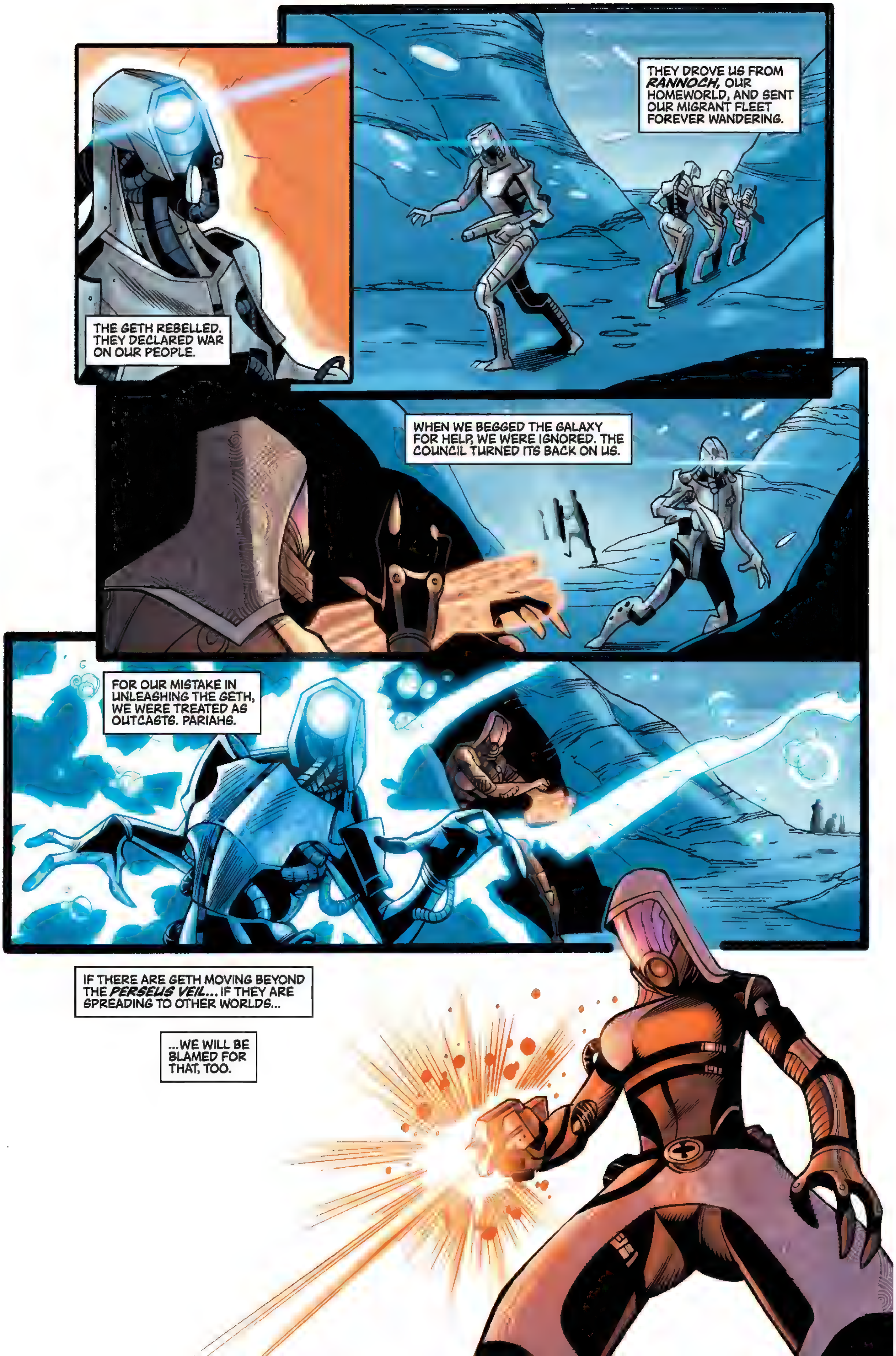

HE'D TELL ME NOT TO BE ***LAZY...***

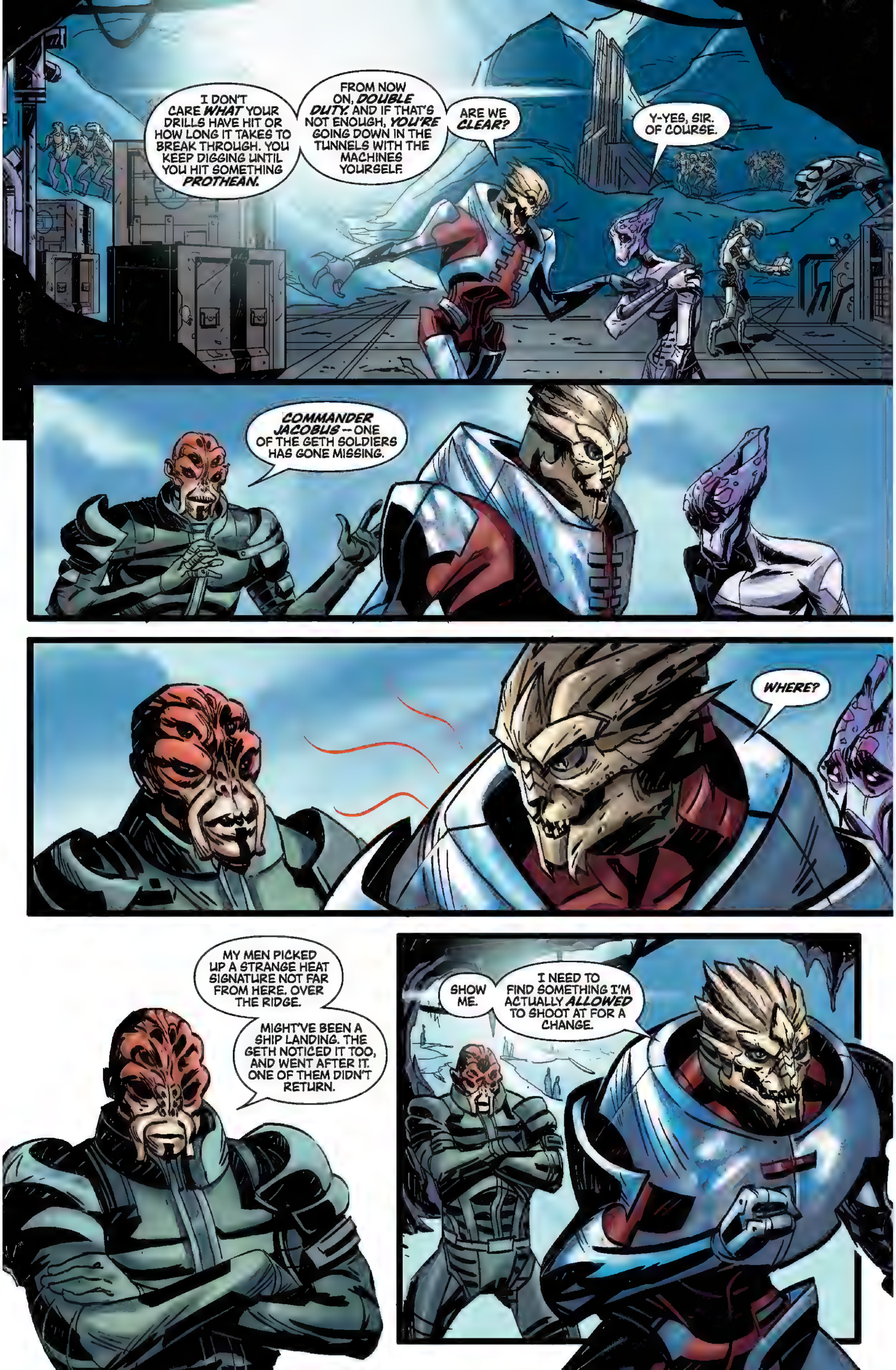

...TO GUARD MYSELF AGAINST THE GALAXY'S ***HARSHNESS*** AND ***CRUELTY...***

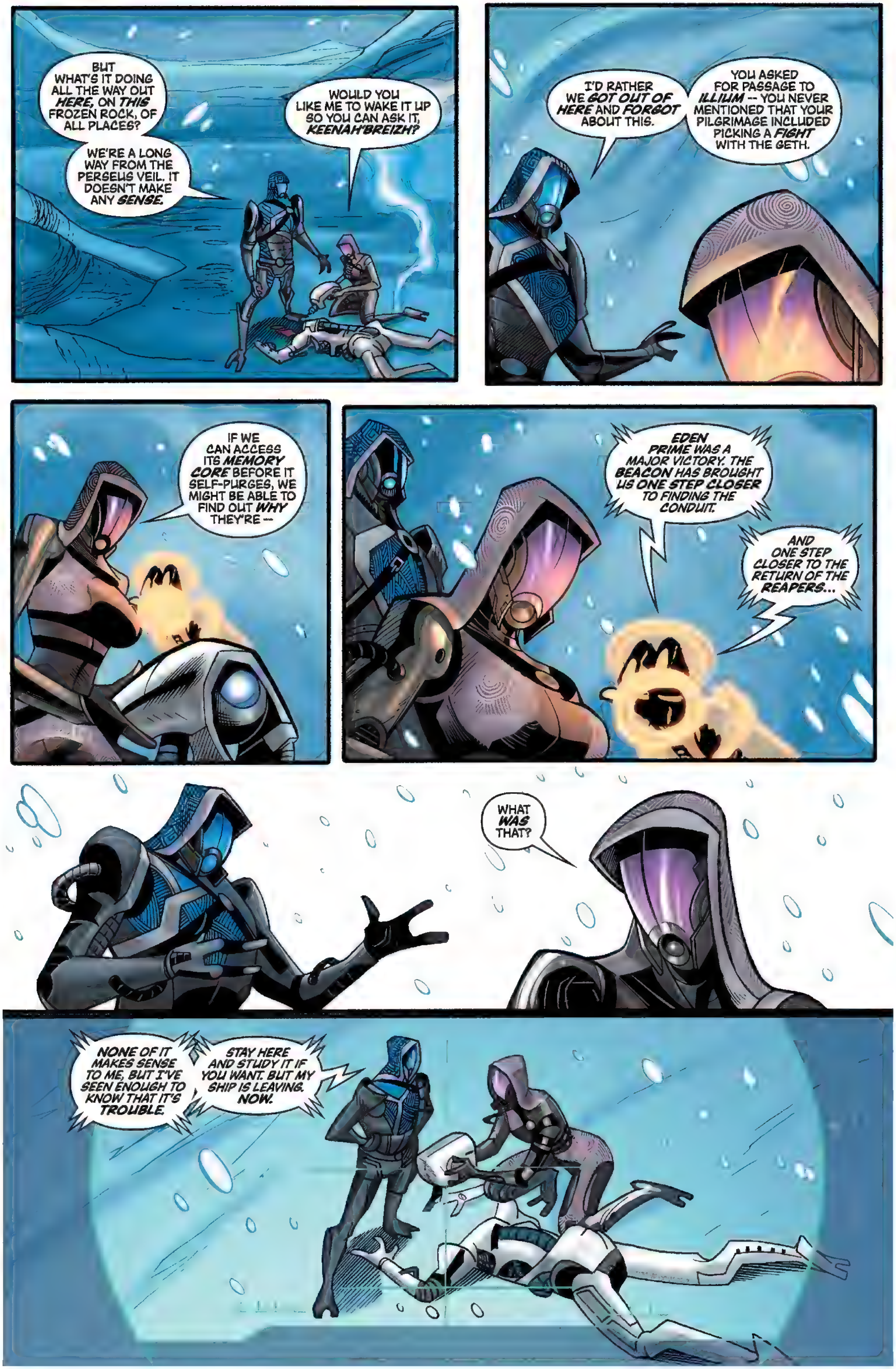

I NEED HELP...
PLEASE.
...OR ELSE MY ***WEAKNESS*** COULD DOOM THE ENTIRE QUARIAN RACE.

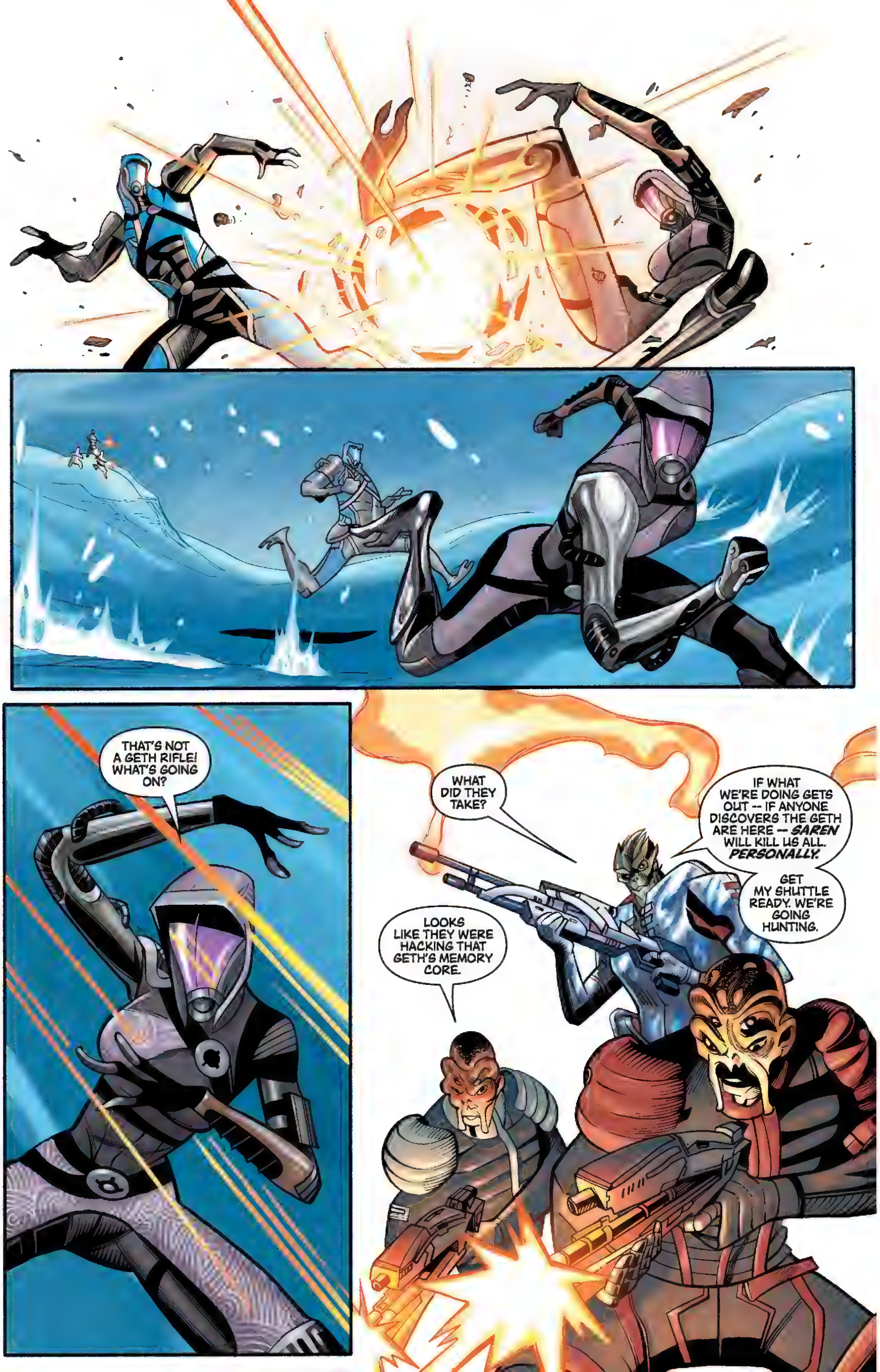

IT ALL STARTED JUST A FEW DAYS EARLIER. I HAD LEFT THE FLEET FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE, TAKING THE FIRST STEPS OF MY PILGRIMAGE...
I NEEDN'T IMPRESS UPON YOU THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TASK THAT LIES AHEAD OF YOU...
...OR THE GREAT HONOR YOU WILL BRING TO THIS FAMILY WHEN YOU RETURN WITH DATA OR TECHNOLOGY THAT BENEFITS THE MIGRANT FLEET.
IT'S A HEAVY BURDEN, THE EXPECTATIONS YOU CARRY WITH YOU, BUT AS MY DAUGHTER...
TALI'ZORAH— I'M SORRY TO INTERRUPT.
THAT WAS ADMIRAL RAEL'ZORAH. WAS IT IMPORTANT?
NOT REALLY. IF YOU'VE HEARD ONE LECTURE FROM MY FATHER, YOU'VE HEARD THEM ALL.
KLIK!
SOMEWHERE IN THE CRESCENT NEBULA.
"WE SCANNED THE PLANET BELOW AS YOU REQUESTED, AND WE FOUND SOMETHING. I'M AFRAID YOU WERE RIGHT, TALI...

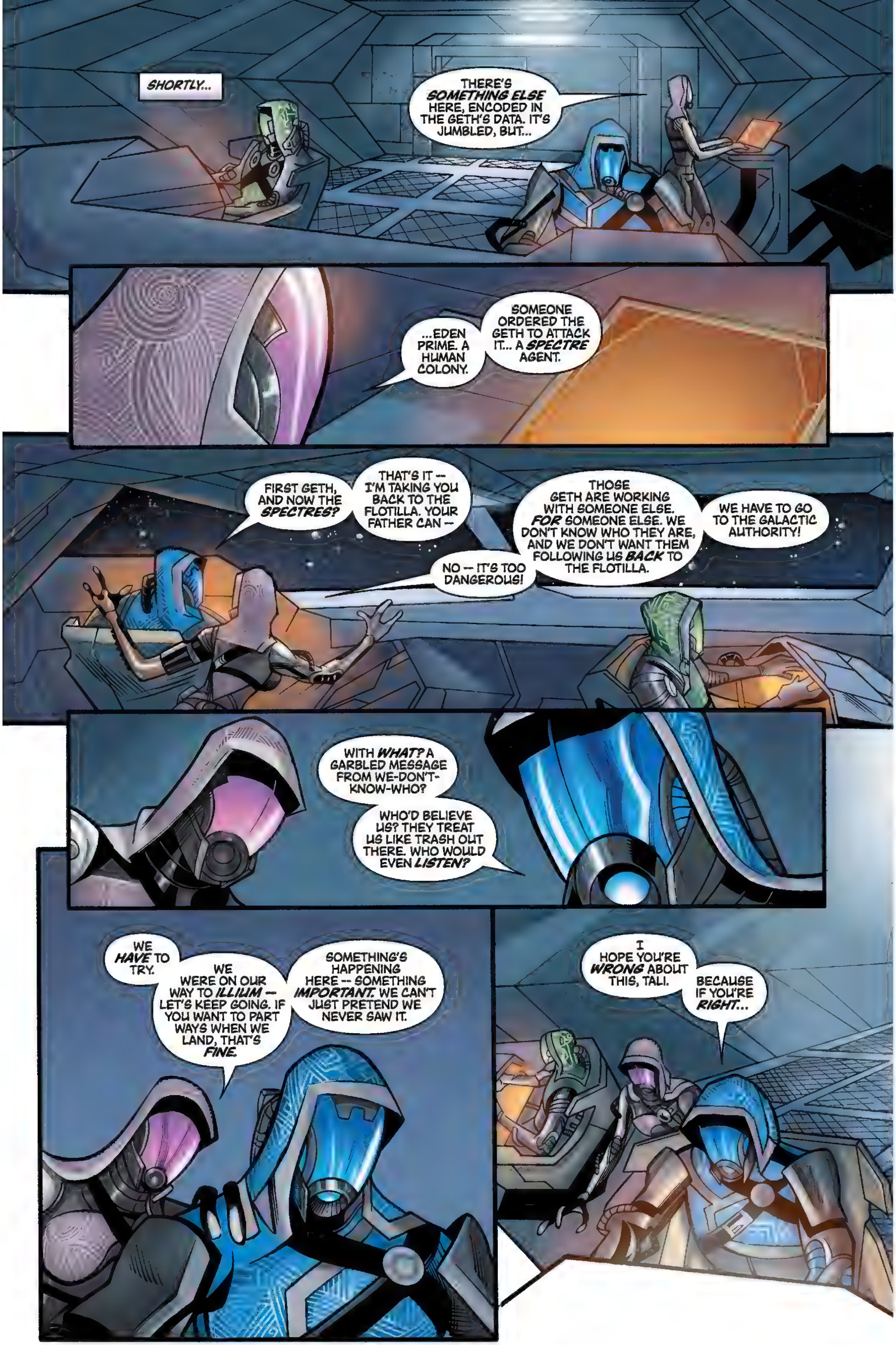

"...IT'S THE *GETH.*"
THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO, MY PEOPLE CREATED THE *GETH* -- WE DESIGNED THEM AS SOLDIERS, LABORERS. THE PERFECT AUTOMATED WORK FORCE.
WE NETWORKED THEIR VIRTUAL INTELLIGENCE, EXPECTING IT TO *INCREASE* THEIR EFFICIENCY. INSTEAD IT MADE THEM *SELF-AWARE.*
COME ON...
COME ON, YOU *BOSH'TET.* ONE PING, THAT'S ALL I NEED.

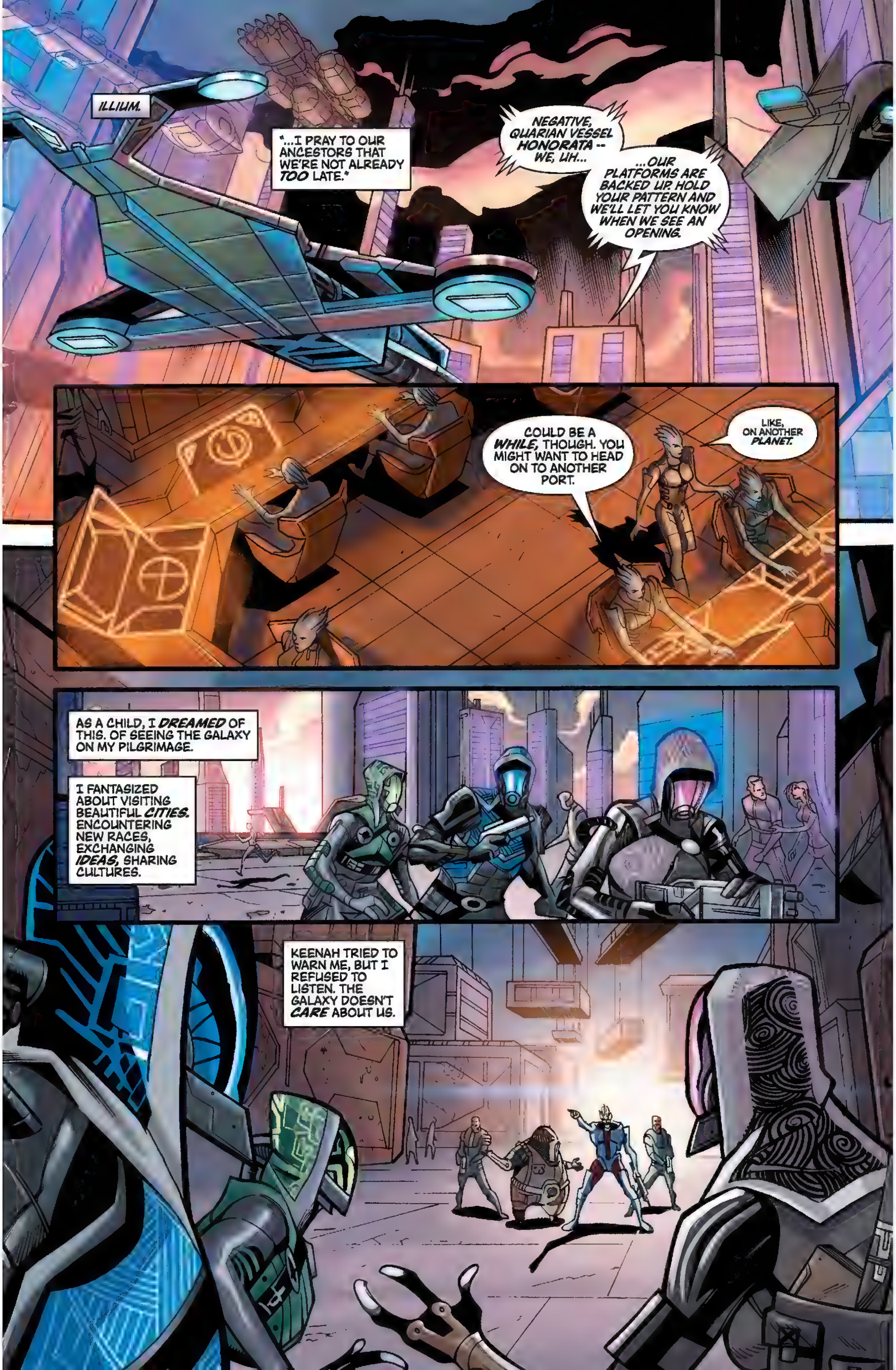

THE GETH REBELLED. THEY DECLARED WAR ON OUR PEOPLE.
THEY DROVE US FROM *RANNOCH,* OUR HOMEWORLD, AND SENT OUR MIGRANT FLEET FOREVER WANDERING.
WHEN WE BEGGED THE GALAXY FOR HELP, WE WERE IGNORED. THE COUNCIL TURNED ITS BACK ON US.
FOR OUR MISTAKE IN UNLEASHING THE GETH, WE WERE TREATED AS OUTCASTS. PARIAHS.
IF THERE ARE GETH MOVING BEYOND THE *PERSEUS VEIL*... IF THEY ARE SPREADING TO OTHER WORLDS...
...WE WILL BE BLAMED FOR THAT, TOO.

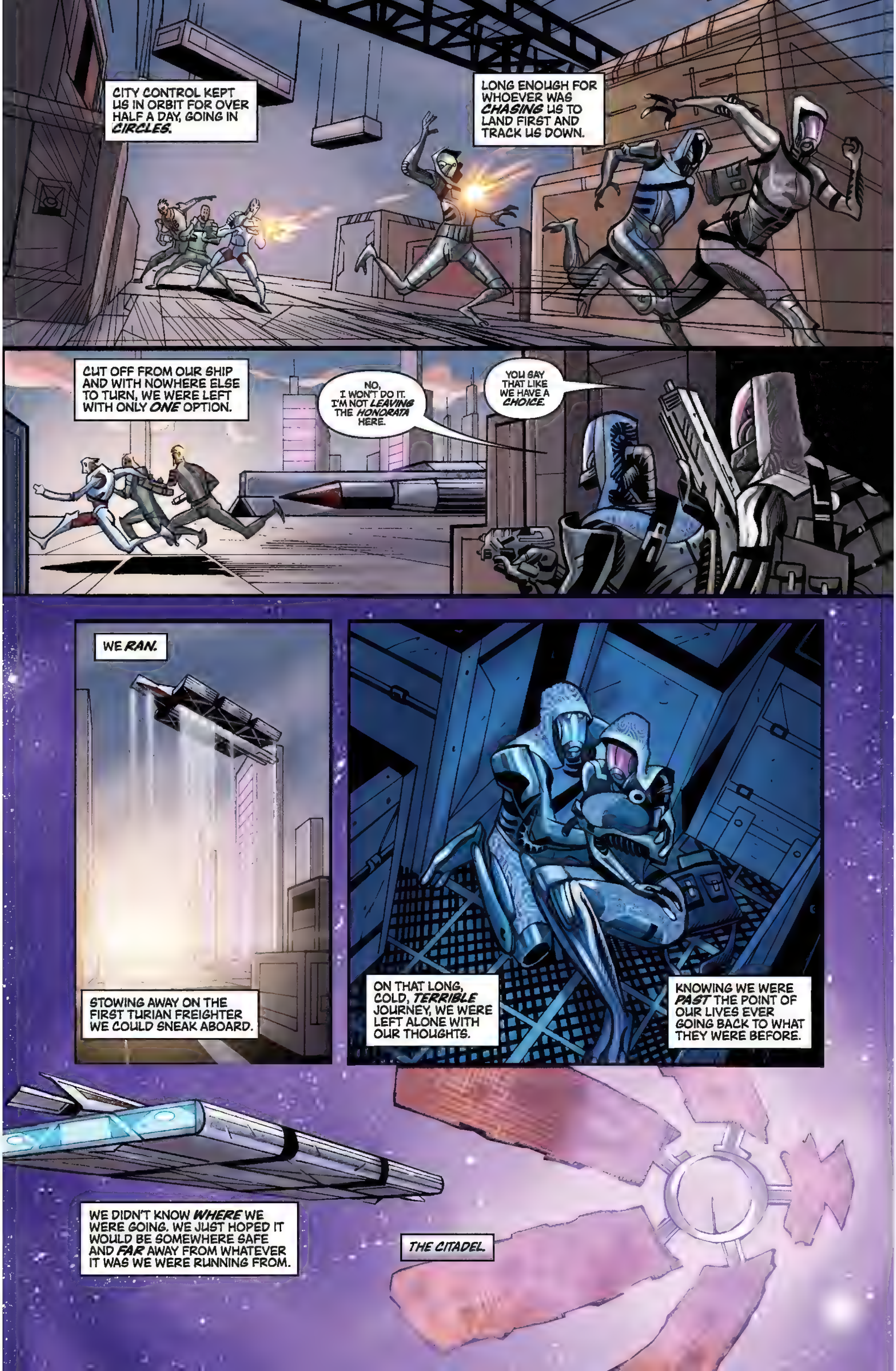

I DON'T CARE *WHAT* YOUR DRILLS HAVE HIT OR HOW LONG IT TAKES TO BREAK THROUGH. YOU KEEP DIGGING UNTIL YOU HIT SOMETHING *PROTHEAN.*
FROM NOW ON, *DOUBLE DUTY.* AND IF THAT'S NOT ENOUGH, *YOU'RE* GOING DOWN IN THE TUNNELS WITH THE MACHINES YOURSELF.
ARE WE *CLEAR?*
Y-YES, SIR. OF COURSE.
COMMANDER JACOBUS-- ONE OF THE GETH SOLDIERS HAS GONE MISSING.
WHERE?
MY MEN PICKED UP A STRANGE HEAT SIGNATURE NOT FAR FROM HERE. OVER THE RIDGE.
MIGHT'VE BEEN A SHIP LANDING. THE GETH NOTICED IT TOO, AND WENT AFTER IT. ONE OF THEM DIDN'T RETURN.
SHOW ME.
I NEED TO FIND SOMETHING I'M ACTUALLY *ALLOWED* TO SHOOT AT FOR A CHANGE.

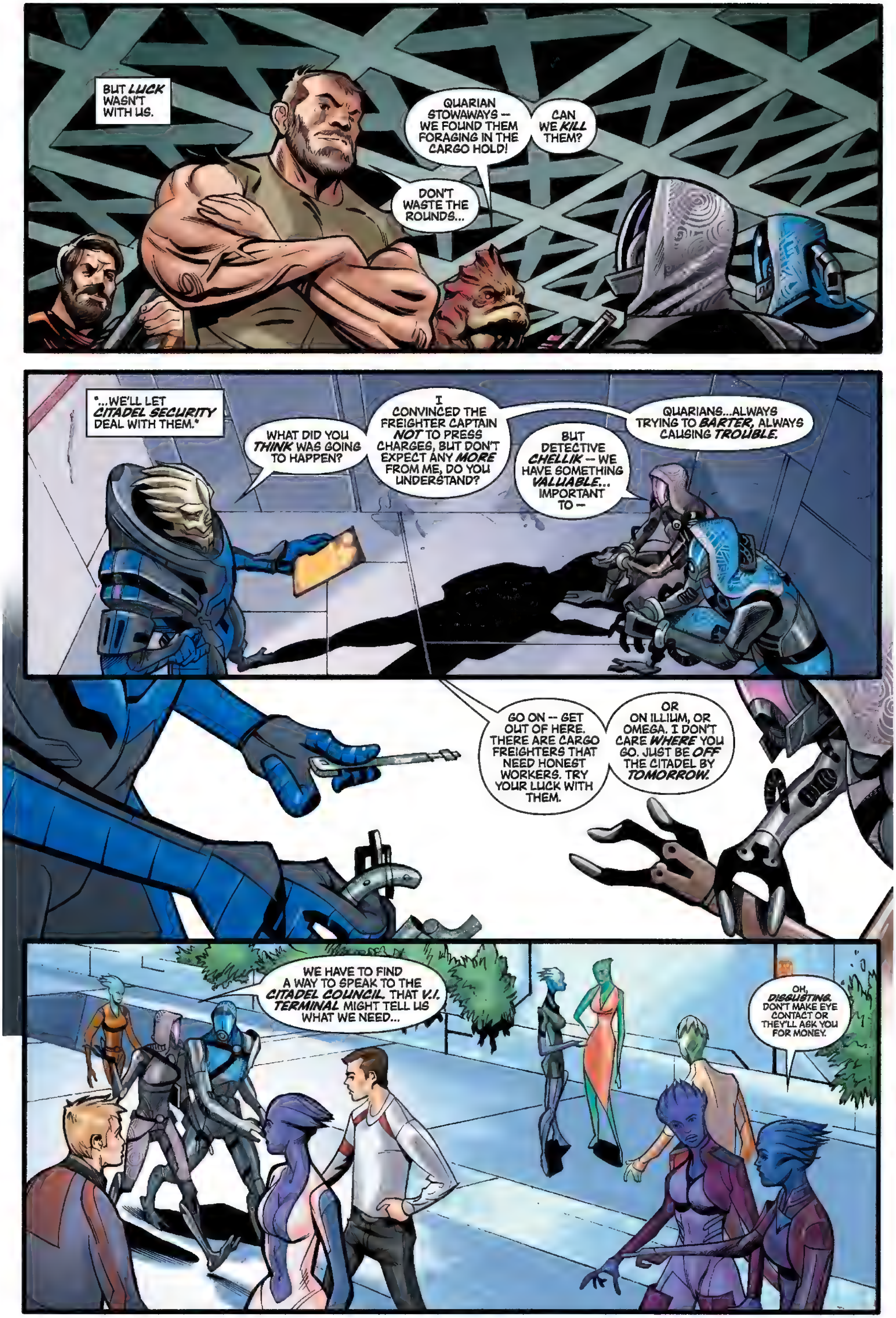

BUT WHAT'S IT DOING ALL THE WAY OUT *HERE,* ON *THIS* FROZEN ROCK, OF ALL PLACES?
WE'RE A LONG WAY FROM THE PERSEUS VEIL. IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY *SENSE.*
WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO WAKE IT UP SO YOU CAN ASK IT, *KEENAH'BREIZH?*
YOU ASKED FOR PASSAGE TO *ILLIUM* -- YOU NEVER MENTIONED THAT YOUR PILGRIMAGE INCLUDED PICKING A *FIGHT* WITH THE GETH.
I'D RATHER WE *GOT OUT OF HERE* AND *FORGOT* ABOUT THIS.
IF WE CAN ACCESS ITS *MEMORY CORE* BEFORE IT SELF-PURGES, WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO FIND OUT *WHY* THEY'RE --
EDEN PRIME WAS A MAJOR VICTORY. THE BEACON HAS BROUGHT US ONE STEP CLOSER TO FINDING THE CONDUIT.
AND ONE STEP CLOSER TO THE RETURN OF THE REAPERS...
WHAT *WAS* THAT?
NONE OF IT MAKES SENSE TO ME, BUT I'VE SEEN ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT IT'S TROUBLE.
STAY HERE AND STUDY IT IF YOU WANT. BUT MY SHIP IS LEAVING. NOW.

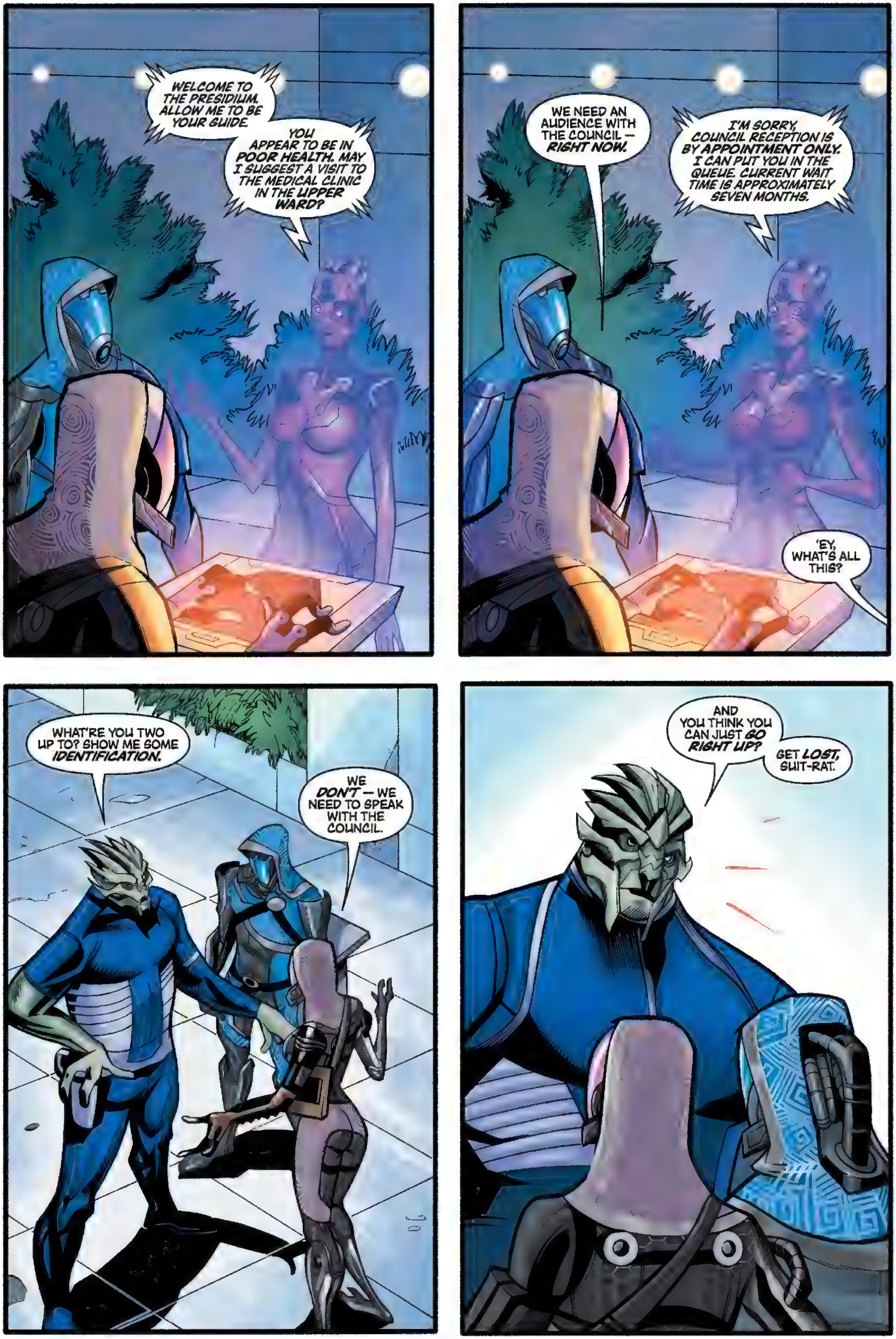

THAT'S NOT A GETH RIFLE! WHAT'S GOING ON?
WHAT DID THEY TAKE?
LOOKS LIKE THEY WERE HACKING THAT GETH'S MEMORY CORE.
IF WHAT WE'RE DOING GETS OUT -- IF ANYONE DISCOVERS THE GETH ARE HERE -- *SAREN* WILL KILL US ALL. *PERSONALLY.*
GET MY SHUTTLE READY. WE'RE GOING HUNTING.

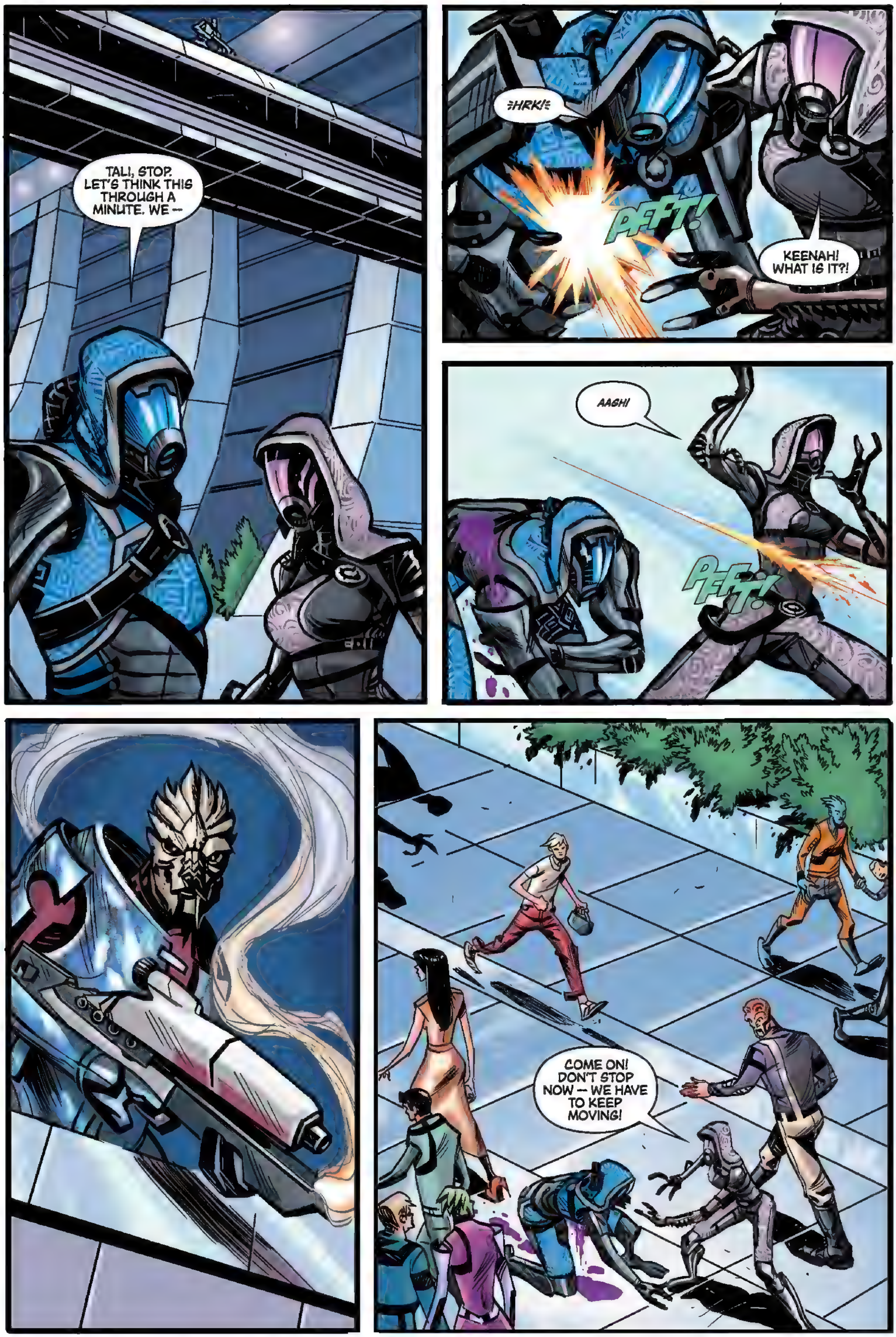

SHORTLY...
THERE'S *SOMETHING ELSE* HERE, ENCODED IN THE GETH'S DATA. IT'S JUMBLED, BUT...
...EDEN PRIME. A HUMAN COLONY.
SOMEONE ORDERED THE GETH TO ATTACK IT... A *SPECTRE* AGENT.
FIRST GETH, AND NOW THE *SPECTRES?*
THAT'S IT -- I'M TAKING YOU BACK TO THE FLOTILLA. YOUR FATHER CAN --
NO -- IT'S TOO DANGEROUS!
THOSE GETH ARE WORKING WITH SOMEONE ELSE. *FOR* SOMEONE ELSE. WE DON'T KNOW WHO THEY ARE, AND WE DON'T WANT THEM FOLLOWING US *BACK* TO THE FLOTILLA.
WE HAVE TO GO TO THE GALACTIC AUTHORITY!
WITH *WHAT?* A GARBLED MESSAGE FROM WE-DON'T-KNOW-WHO?
WHO'D BELIEVE US? THEY TREAT US LIKE TRASH OUT THERE. WHO WOULD EVEN *LISTEN?*
WE *HAVE* TO TRY.
WE WERE ON OUR WAY TO *ILLIUM* -- LET'S KEEP GOING. IF YOU WANT TO PART WAYS WHEN WE LAND, THAT'S *FINE.*
SOMETHING'S HAPPENING HERE -- SOMETHING *IMPORTANT.* WE CAN'T JUST PRETEND WE NEVER SAW IT.
I HOPE YOU'RE *WRONG* ABOUT THIS, TALI.
BECAUSE IF YOU'RE *RIGHT*...

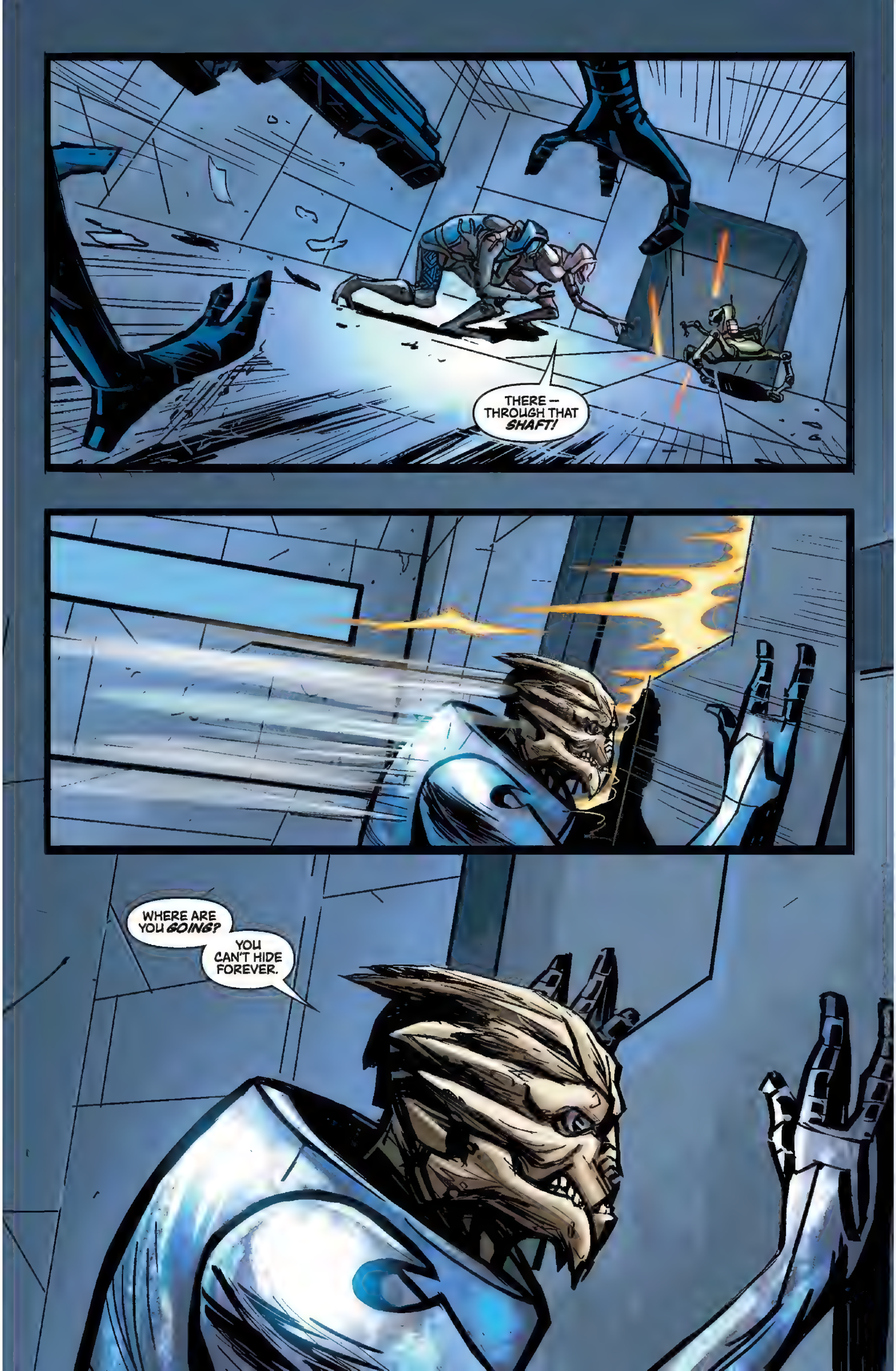

ILLIUM.
"...I PRAY TO OUR ANCESTORS THAT WE'RE NOT ALREADY *TOO* LATE."
NEGATIVE, QUARIAN VESSEL *HONORATA* -- WE, UH...
...OUR PLATFORMS ARE BACKED UP. HOLD YOUR PATTERN AND WE'LL LET YOU KNOW WHEN WE SEE AN OPENING.
COULD BE A *WHILE*, THOUGH. YOU MIGHT WANT TO HEAD ON TO ANOTHER PORT.
LIKE, ON ANOTHER *PLANET.*
AS A CHILD, I *DREAMED* OF THIS. OF SEEING THE GALAXY ON MY PILGRIMAGE.
I FANTASIZED ABOUT VISITING BEAUTIFUL *CITIES.* ENCOUNTERING NEW RACES, EXCHANGING *IDEAS,* SHARING CULTURES.
KEENAH TRIED TO WARN ME, BUT I REFUSED TO LISTEN. THE GALAXY DOESN'T *CARE* ABOUT US.

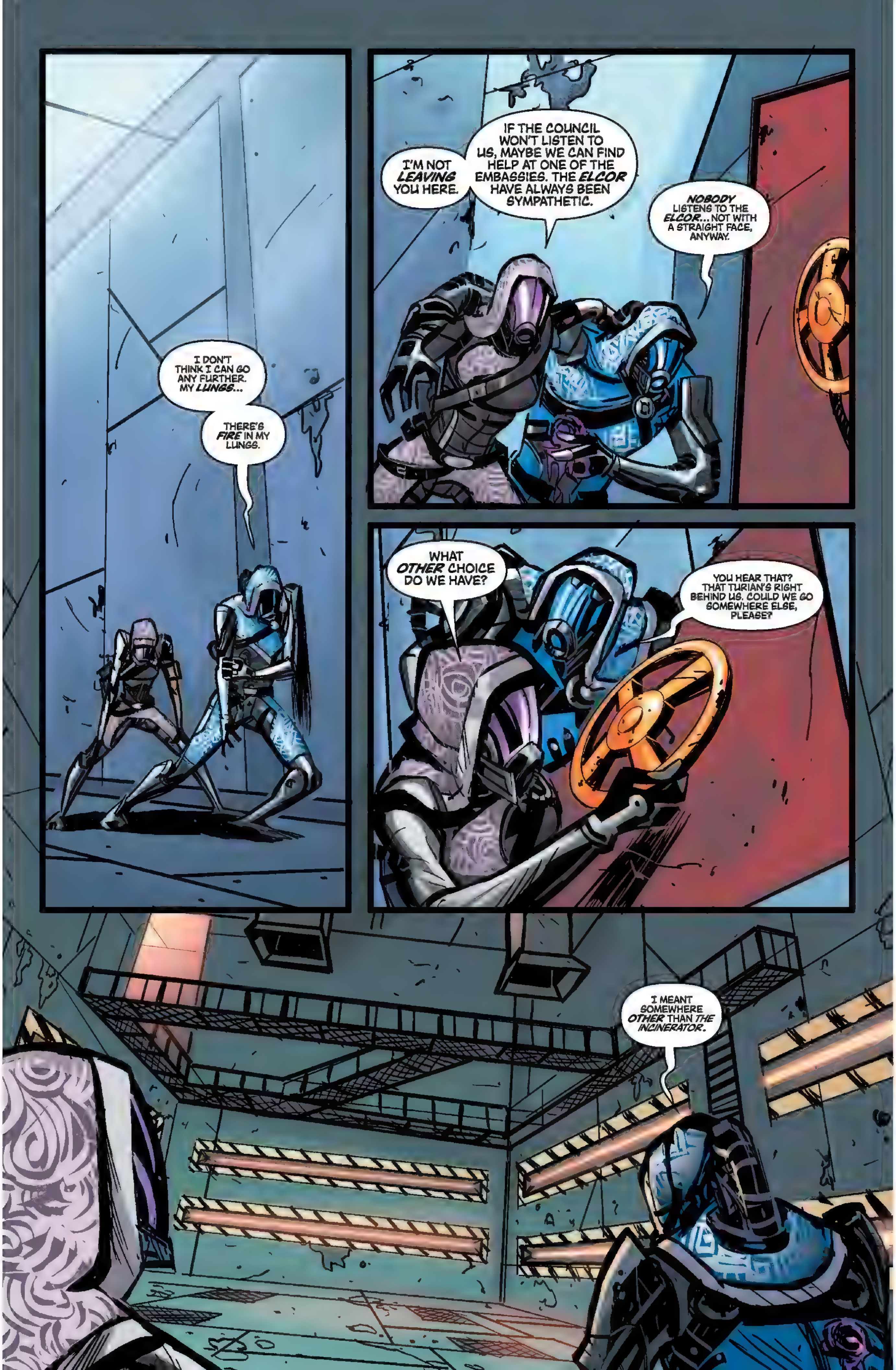

CITY CONTROL KEPT US IN ORBIT FOR OVER HALF A DAY, GOING IN *CIRCLES.*
LONG ENOUGH FOR WHOEVER WAS *CHASING* US TO LAND FIRST AND TRACK US DOWN.
CUT OFF FROM OUR SHIP AND WITH NOWHERE ELSE TO TURN, WE WERE LEFT WITH ONLY *ONE* OPTION.
NO, I WON'T DO IT. I'M NOT *LEAVING* THE *HONORATA* HERE.
YOU SAY THAT LIKE WE HAVE A *CHOICE.*
WE *RAN.*
STOWING AWAY ON THE FIRST TURIAN FREIGHTER WE COULD SNEAK ABOARD.
ON THAT LONG, COLD, *TERRIBLE* JOURNEY, WE WERE LEFT ALONE WITH OUR THOUGHTS.
KNOWING WE WERE *PAST* THE POINT OF OUR LIVES EVER GOING BACK TO WHAT THEY WERE BEFORE.
WE DIDN'T KNOW *WHERE* WE WERE GOING. WE JUST HOPED IT WOULD BE SOMEWHERE SAFE AND *FAR* AWAY FROM WHATEVER IT WAS WE WERE RUNNING FROM.
THE CITADEL.

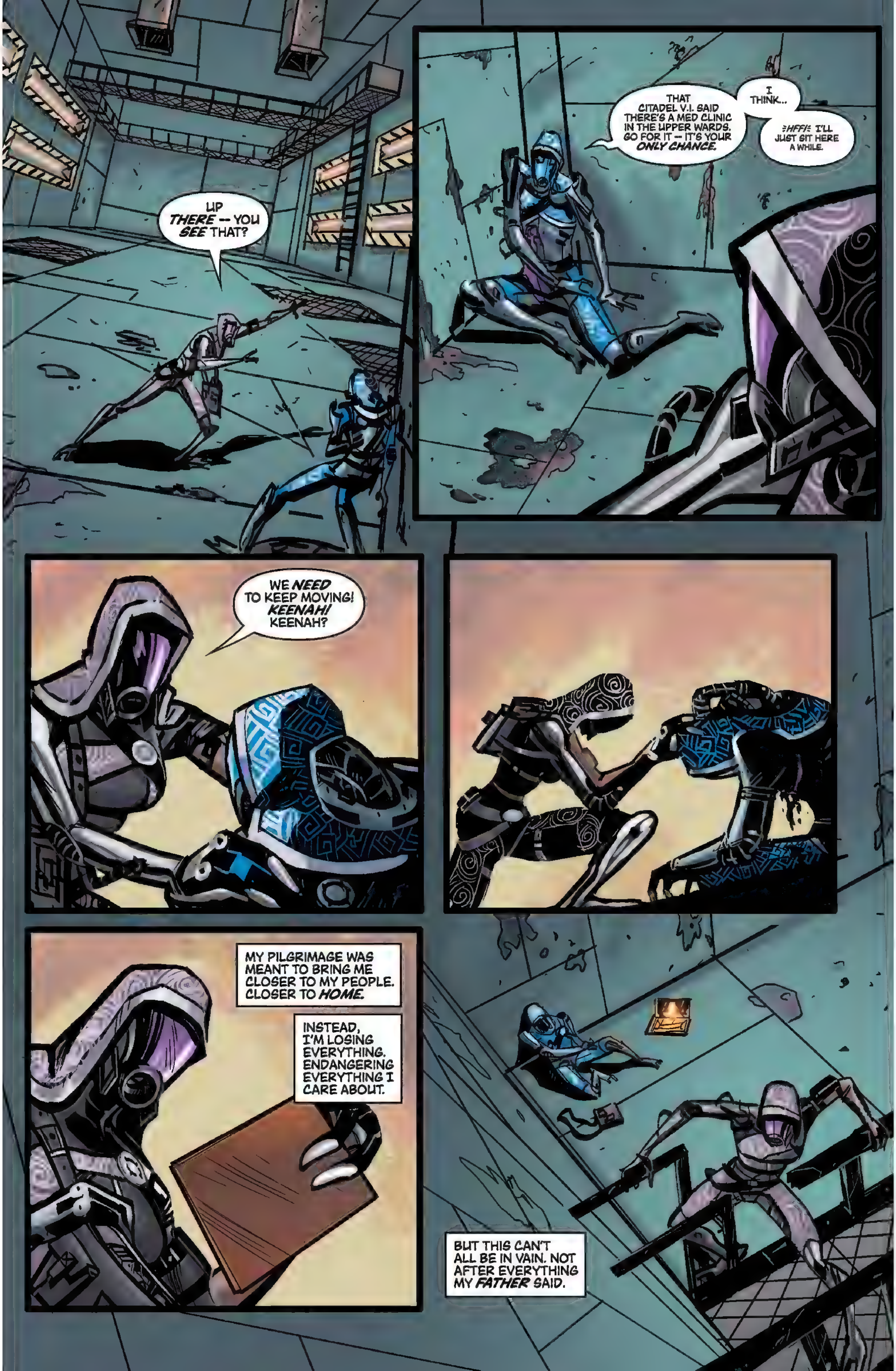

BUT *LUCK* WASN'T WITH US.
QUARIAN STOWAWAYS -- WE FOUND THEM FORAGING IN THE CARGO HOLD!
CAN WE *KILL* THEM?
DON'T WASTE THE ROUNDS...
"...WE'LL LET *CITADEL SECURITY* DEAL WITH THEM."
WHAT DID YOU *THINK* WAS GOING TO HAPPEN?
I CONVINCED THE FREIGHTER CAPTAIN *NOT* TO PRESS CHARGES, BUT DON'T EXPECT ANY *MORE* FROM ME, DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
QUARIANS...ALWAYS TRYING TO *BARTER,* ALWAYS CAUSING *TROUBLE.*
BUT DETECTIVE *CHELLIK* -- WE HAVE SOMETHING *VALUABLE...* IMPORTANT TO --
GO ON -- GET OUT OF HERE. THERE ARE CARGO FREIGHTERS THAT NEED HONEST WORKERS. TRY YOUR LUCK WITH THEM.
OR ON ILLIUM, OR OMEGA. I DON'T CARE *WHERE* YOU GO. JUST BE *OFF* THE CITADEL BY *TOMORROW.*
WE HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO SPEAK TO THE *CITADEL COUNCIL.* THAT *V.I. TERMINAL* MIGHT TELL US WHAT WE NEED...
OH, *DISGUSTING.* DON'T MAKE EYE CONTACT OR THEY'LL ASK YOU FOR MONEY.

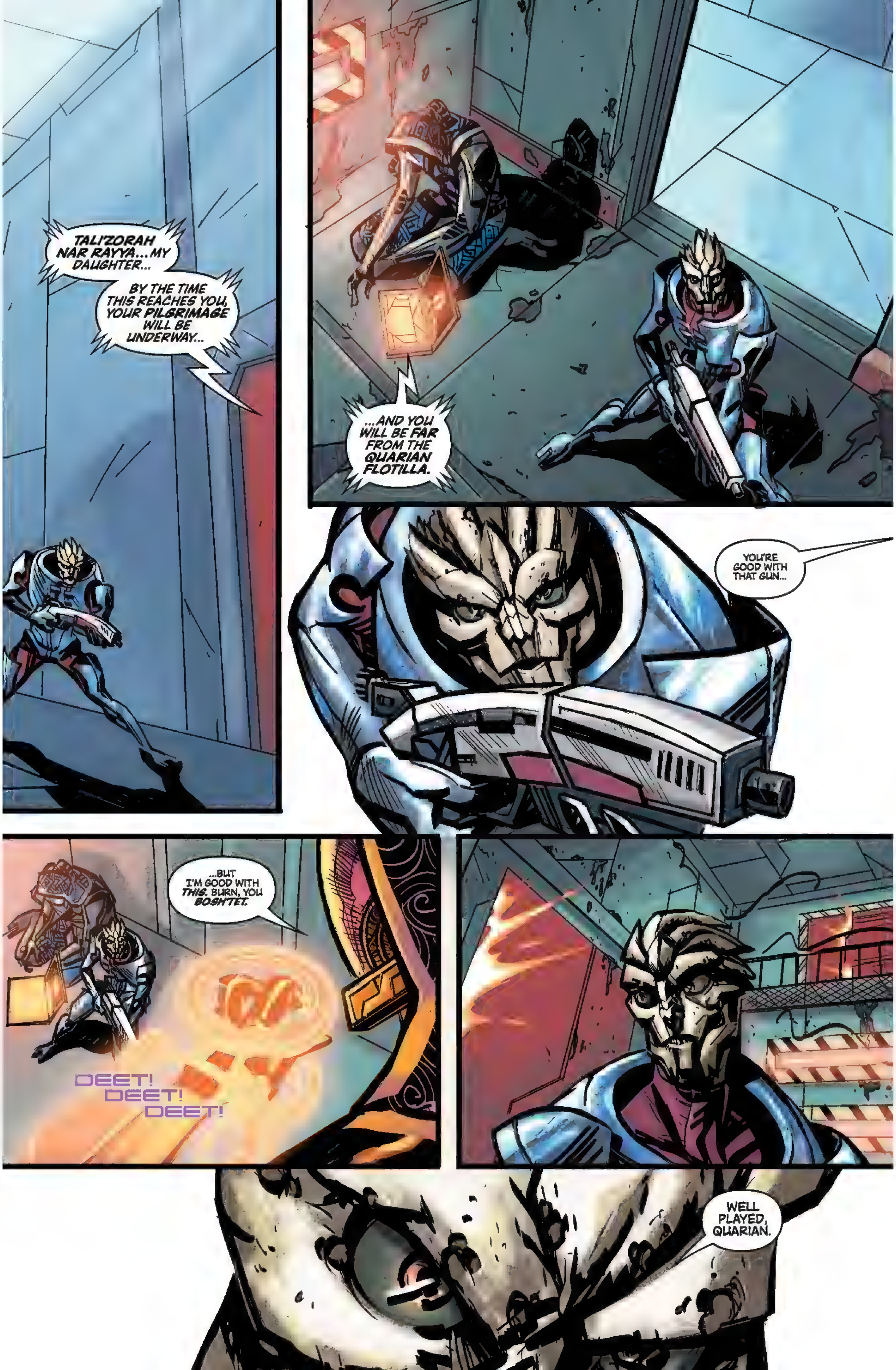

WELCOME TO THE PRESIDIUM. ALLOW ME TO BE YOUR GUIDE.
YOU APPEAR TO BE IN POOR HEALTH. MAY I SUGGEST A VISIT TO THE MEDICAL CLINIC IN THE UPPER WARD?
WE NEED AN AUDIENCE WITH THE COUNCIL -- RIGHT NOW.
I'M SORRY. COUNCIL RECEPTION IS BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. I CAN PUT YOU IN THE QUEUE. CURRENT WAIT TIME IS APPROXIMATELY SEVEN MONTHS.
'EY, WHAT'S ALL THIS?
WHAT'RE YOU TWO UP TO? SHOW ME SOME IDENTIFICATION.
WE DON'T -- WE NEED TO SPEAK WITH THE COUNCIL.
AND YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST GO RIGHT UP?
GET LOST, SUIT-RAT.

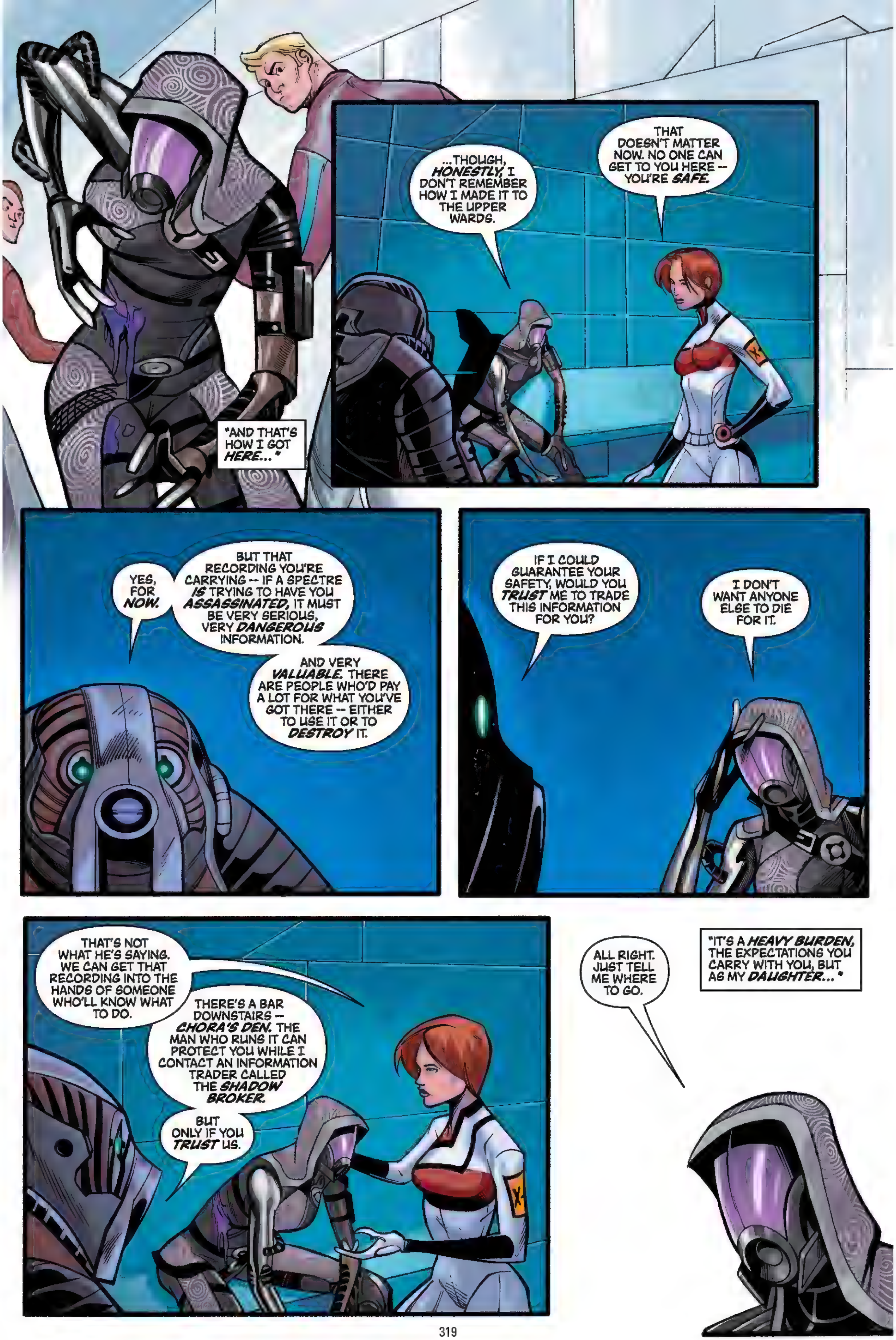

TALI, STOP. LET'S THINK THIS THROUGH A MINUTE. WE --
HRK!
PFFT!
KEENAH! WHAT IS IT?!
AAGH!
PFFT!
COME ON! DON'T STOP NOW -- WE HAVE TO KEEP MOVING!

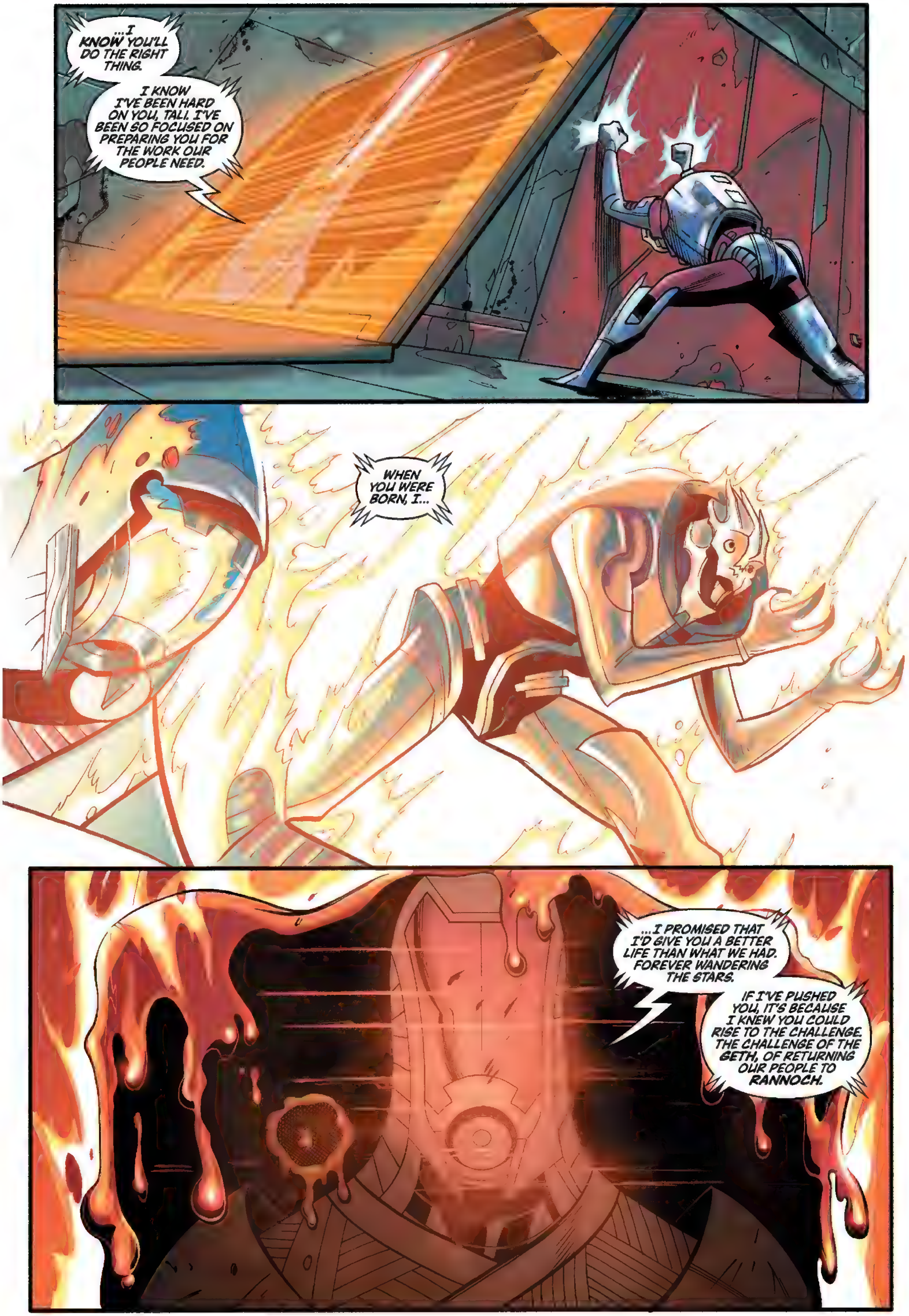

THERE — THROUGH THAT *SHAFT!*
WHERE ARE YOU *GOING?*
YOU CAN'T HIDE FOREVER.

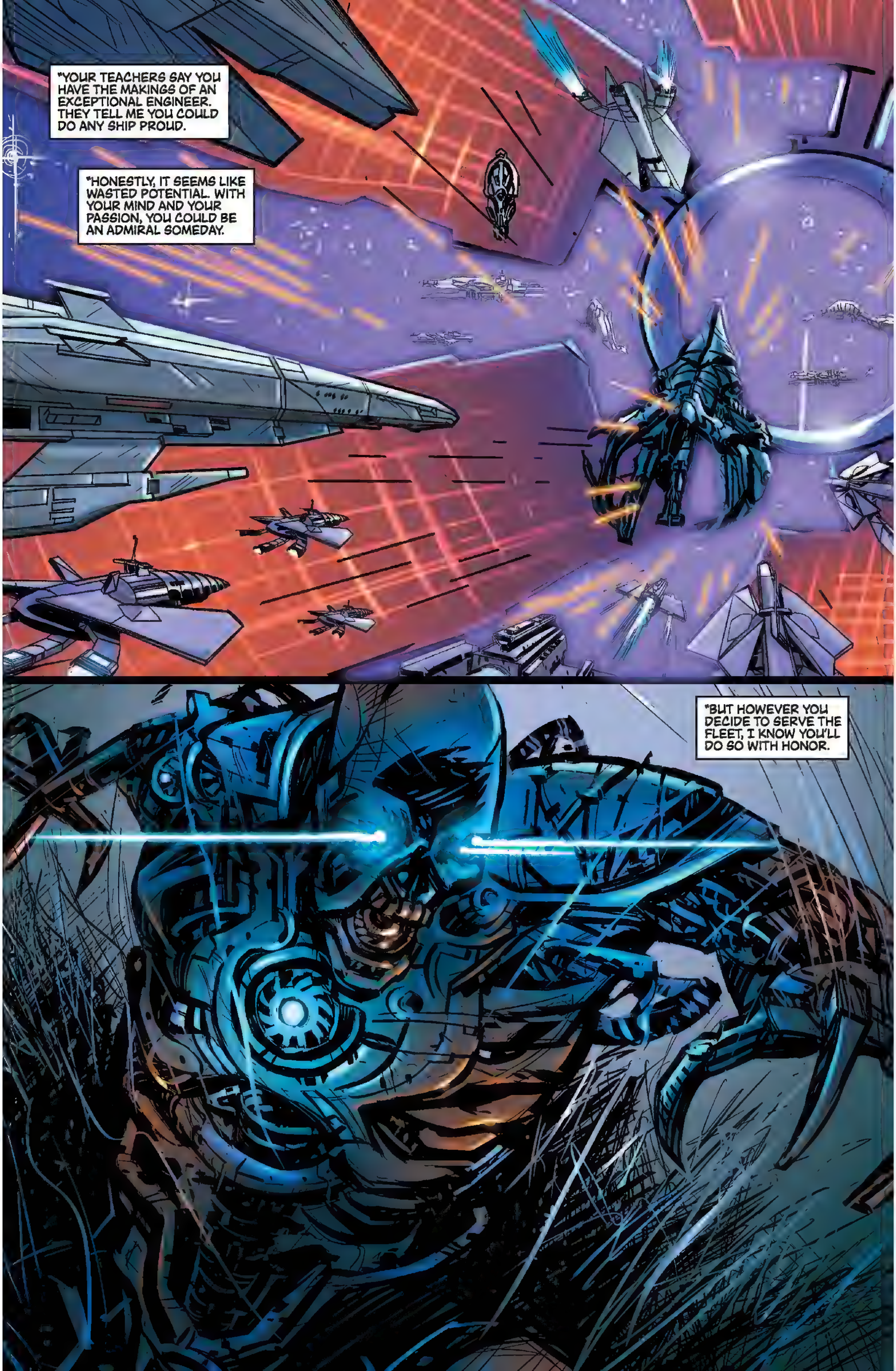

I DON'T THINK I CAN GO ANY FURTHER. MY *LUNGS*...
THERE'S *FIRE* IN MY LUNGS.
I'M NOT *LEAVING* YOU HERE.
IF THE COUNCIL WON'T LISTEN TO US, MAYBE WE CAN FIND HELP AT ONE OF THE EMBASSIES. THE *ELCOR* HAVE ALWAYS BEEN SYMPATHETIC.
NOBODY LISTENS TO THE *ELCOR*... NOT WITH A STRAIGHT FACE, ANYWAY.
WHAT *OTHER* CHOICE DO WE HAVE?
YOU HEAR THAT? THAT TURIAN'S RIGHT BEHIND US. COULD WE GO SOMEWHERE ELSE, PLEASE?
I MEANT SOMEWHERE *OTHER* THAN *THE INCINERATOR*.


UP *THERE* -- YOU *SEE* THAT?
THAT CITADEL V.I. SAID THERE'S A MED CLINIC IN THE UPPER WARDS. GO FOR IT -- IT'S YOUR *ONLY CHANCE.*
I THINK...
HFF! I'LL JUST SIT HERE A WHILE.
WE *NEED* TO KEEP MOVING! *KEENAH!* KEENAH?
MY PILGRIMAGE WAS MEANT TO BRING ME CLOSER TO MY PEOPLE. CLOSER TO *HOME.*
INSTEAD, I'M LOSING EVERYTHING. ENDANGERING EVERYTHING I CARE ABOUT.
BUT THIS CAN'T ALL BE IN VAIN. NOT AFTER EVERYTHING MY *FATHER* SAID.


TALI'ZORAH NAR RAYYA...MY DAUGHTER...
BY THE TIME THIS REACHES YOU, YOUR PILGRIMAGE WILL BE UNDERWAY...
...AND YOU WILL BE FAR FROM THE QUARIAN FLOTILLA.
YOU'RE GOOD WITH THAT GUN...
...BUT I'M GOOD WITH THIS. BURN, YOU BOSH'TET.
DEET! DEET! DEET!
WELL PLAYED, QUARIAN.


"AND THAT'S HOW I GOT *HERE...*"
...THOUGH, *HONESTLY,* I DON'T REMEMBER HOW I MADE IT TO THE UPPER WARDS.
THAT DOESN'T MATTER NOW. NO ONE CAN GET TO YOU HERE -- YOU'RE *SAFE.*
YES, FOR *NOW.*
BUT THAT RECORDING YOU'RE CARRYING -- IF A SPECTRE *IS* TRYING TO HAVE YOU *ASSASSINATED,* IT MUST BE VERY SERIOUS, VERY *DANGEROUS* INFORMATION.
AND VERY *VALUABLE.* THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO'D PAY A LOT FOR WHAT YOU'VE GOT THERE -- EITHER TO USE IT OR TO *DESTROY* IT.
IF I COULD GUARANTEE YOUR SAFETY, WOULD YOU *TRUST* ME TO TRADE THIS INFORMATION FOR YOU?
I DON'T WANT ANYONE ELSE TO DIE FOR IT.
THAT'S NOT WHAT HE'S SAYING. WE CAN GET THAT RECORDING INTO THE HANDS OF SOMEONE WHO'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO.
THERE'S A BAR DOWNSTAIRS -- *CHORA'S DEN.* THE MAN WHO RUNS IT CAN PROTECT YOU WHILE I CONTACT AN INFORMATION TRADER CALLED THE *SHADOW BROKER.*
BUT ONLY IF YOU *TRUST* US.
ALL RIGHT. JUST TELL ME WHERE TO GO.
"IT'S A *HEAVY BURDEN,* THE EXPECTATIONS YOU CARRY WITH YOU, BUT AS MY *DAUGHTER...*"


...I KNOW YOU'LL DO THE RIGHT THING.
I KNOW I'VE BEEN HARD ON YOU, TALI. I'VE BEEN SO FOCUSED ON PREPARING YOU FOR THE WORK OUR PEOPLE NEED.
WHEN YOU WERE BORN, I...
...I PROMISED THAT I'D GIVE YOU A BETTER LIFE THAN WHAT WE HAD. FOREVER WANDERING THE STARS.
IF I'VE PUSHED YOU, IT'S BECAUSE I KNEW YOU COULD RISE TO THE CHALLENGE. THE CHALLENGE OF THE GETH, OF RETURNING OUR PEOPLE TO RANNOCH.


"YOUR TEACHERS SAY YOU HAVE THE MAKINGS OF AN EXCEPTIONAL ENGINEER. THEY TELL ME YOU COULD DO ANY SHIP PROUD.
"HONESTLY, IT SEEMS LIKE WASTED POTENTIAL. WITH YOUR MIND AND YOUR PASSION, YOU COULD BE AN ADMIRAL SOMEDAY.
"BUT HOWEVER YOU DECIDE TO SERVE THE FLEET, I KNOW YOU'LL DO SO WITH HONOR.

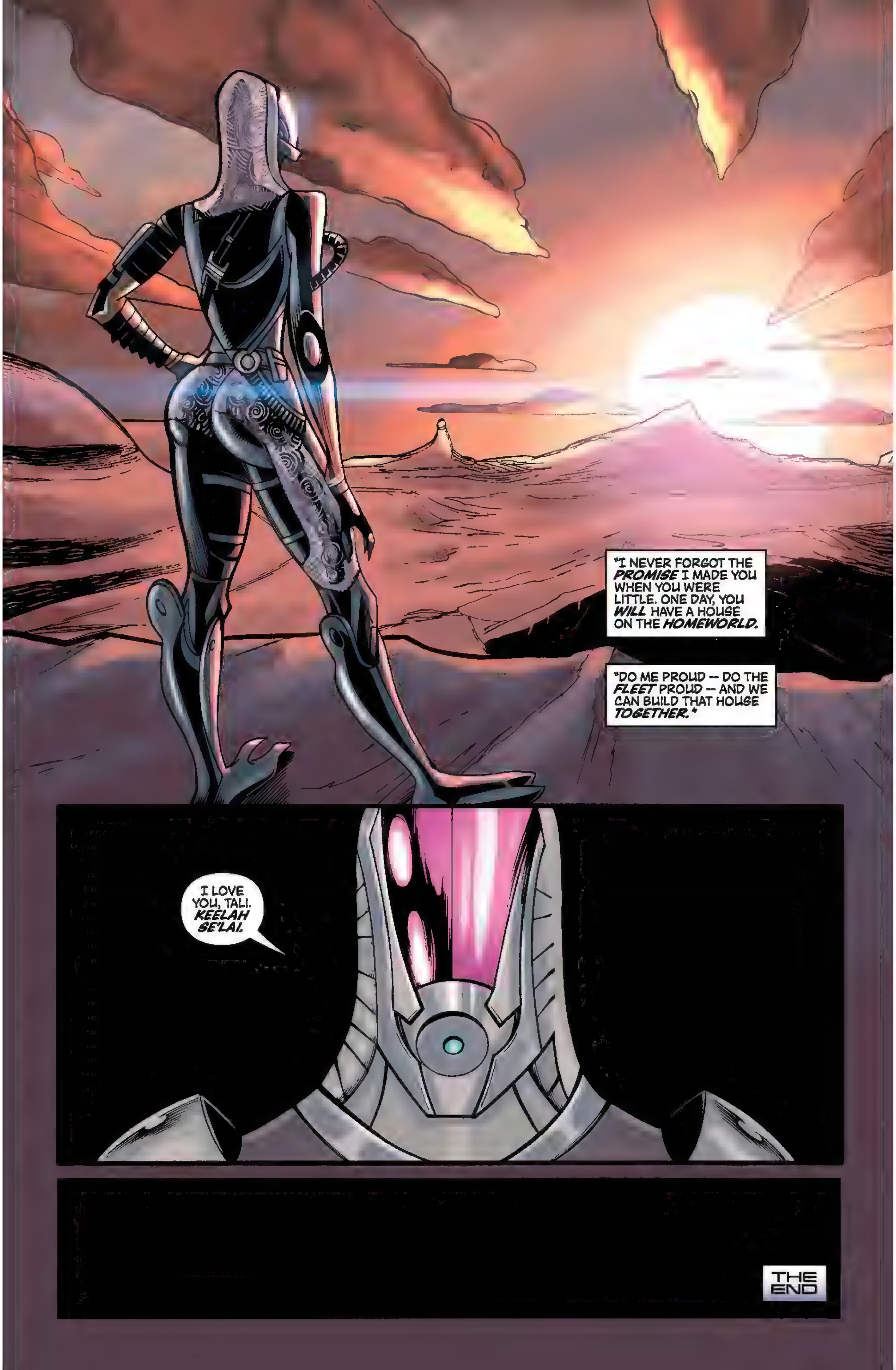

"I NEVER FORGOT THE *PROMISE* I MADE YOU WHEN YOU WERE LITTLE. ONE DAY, YOU *WILL* HAVE A HOUSE ON THE *HOMEWORLD.*
"DO ME PROUD -- DO THE *FLEET* PROUD -- AND WE CAN BUILD THAT HOUSE *TOGETHER.*"
I LOVE YOU, TALI. *KEELAH SE'LAI.*
THE END

Illustration by Anthony Palumbo

HOMEWORLDS
GARRUS VAKARIAN

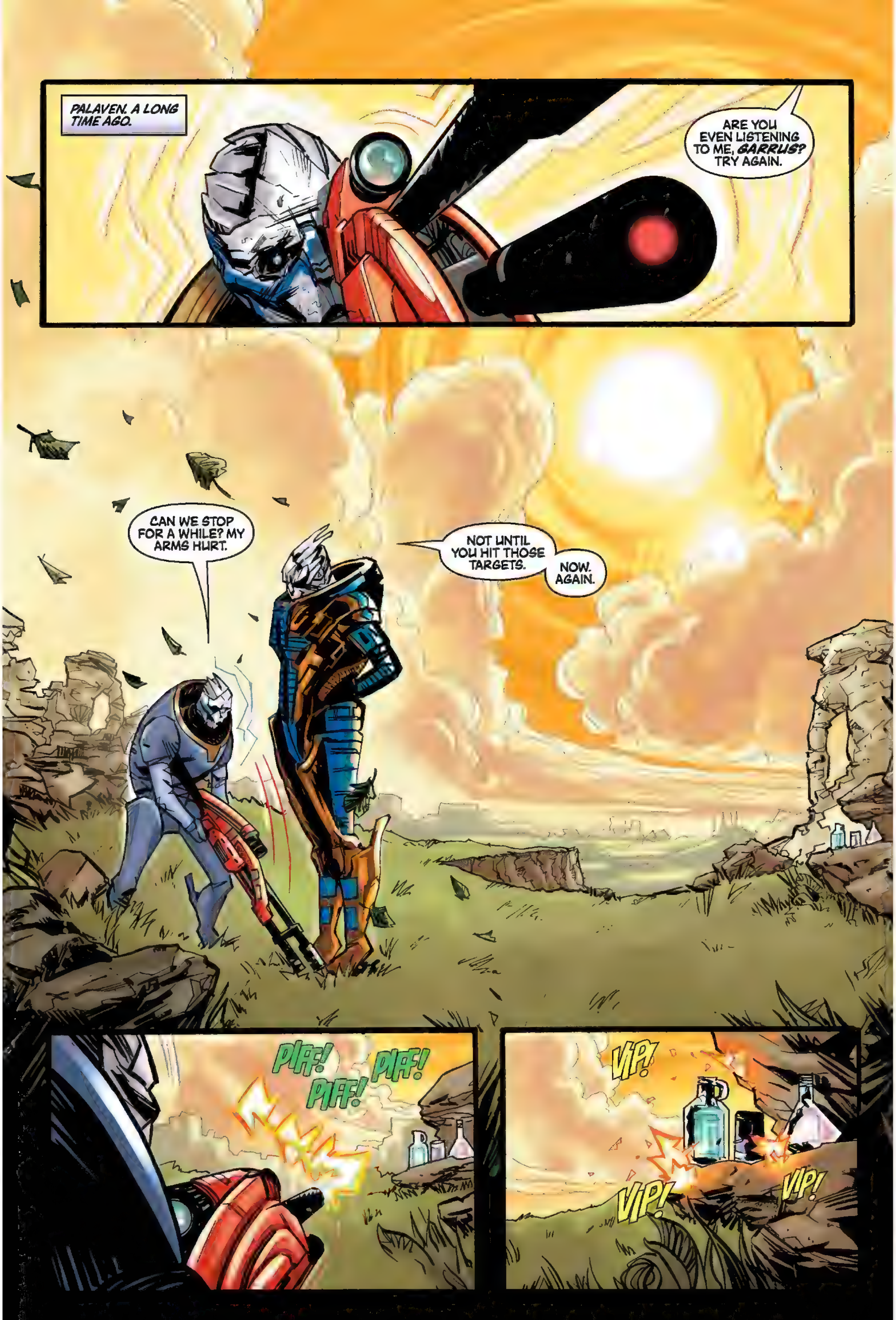
STORY
Mac Walters and John Dombrow

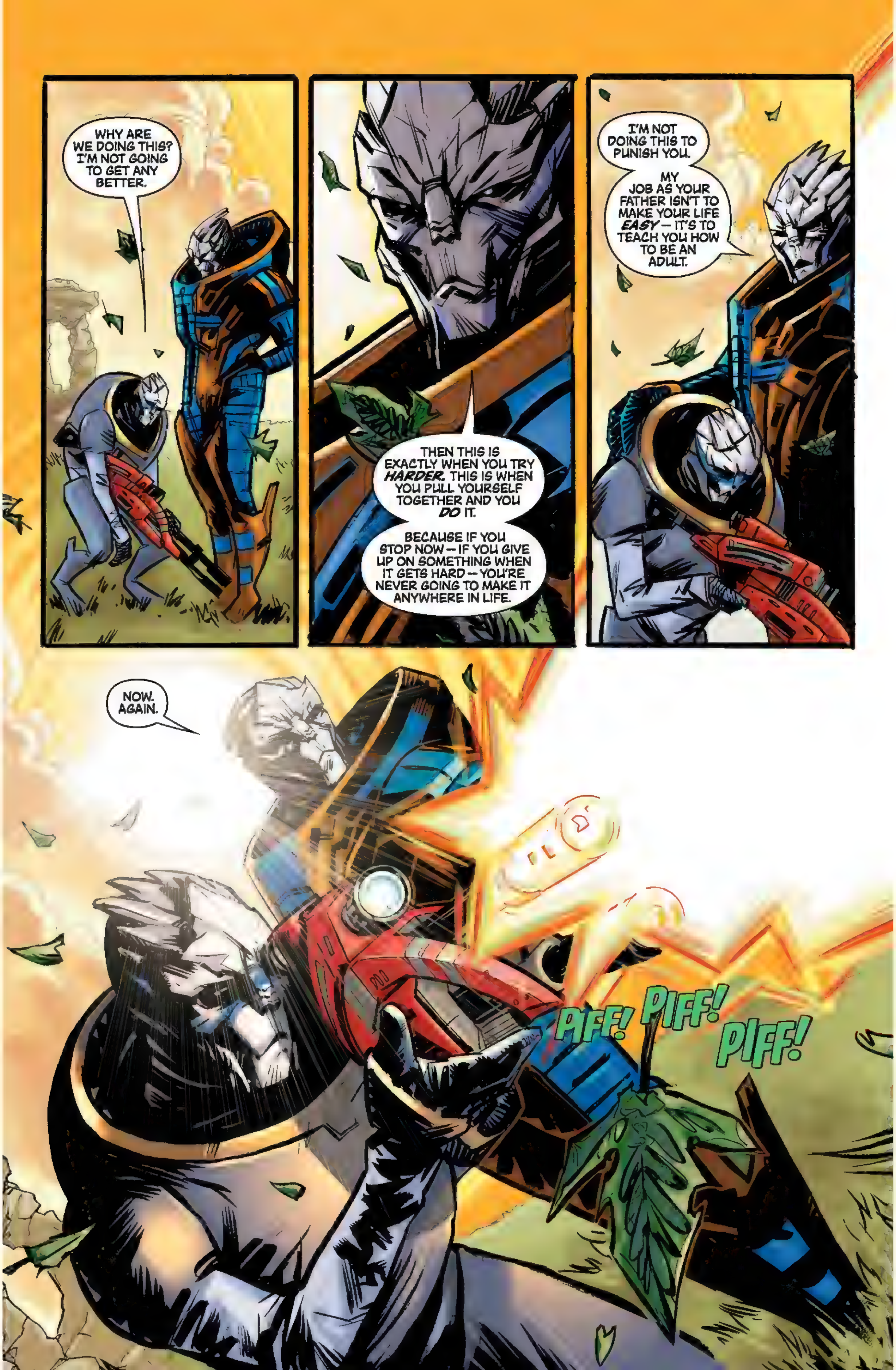
SCRIPT
Jeremy Barlow

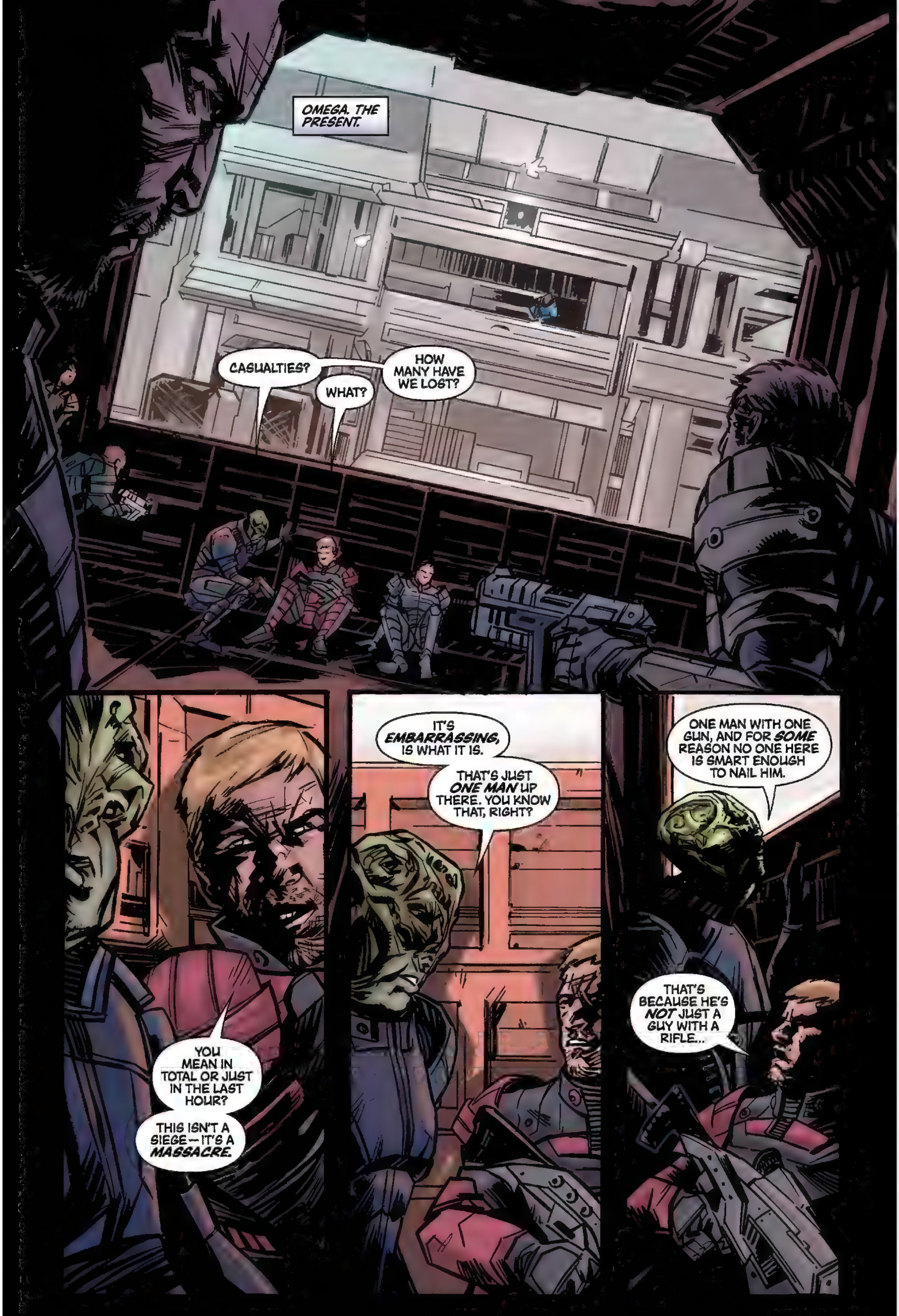
ART
Garry Brown

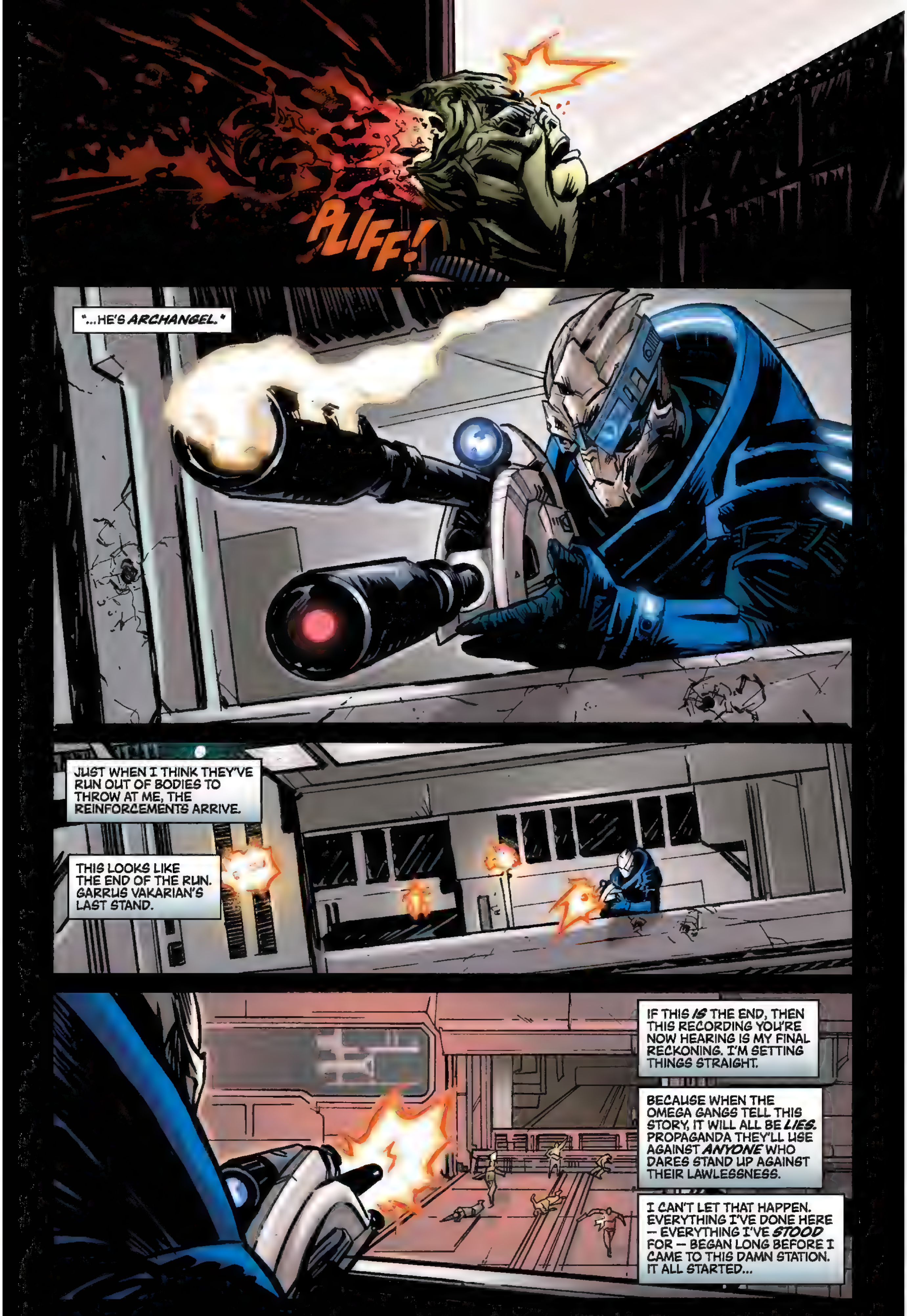
COLORS
Michael Atiyeh

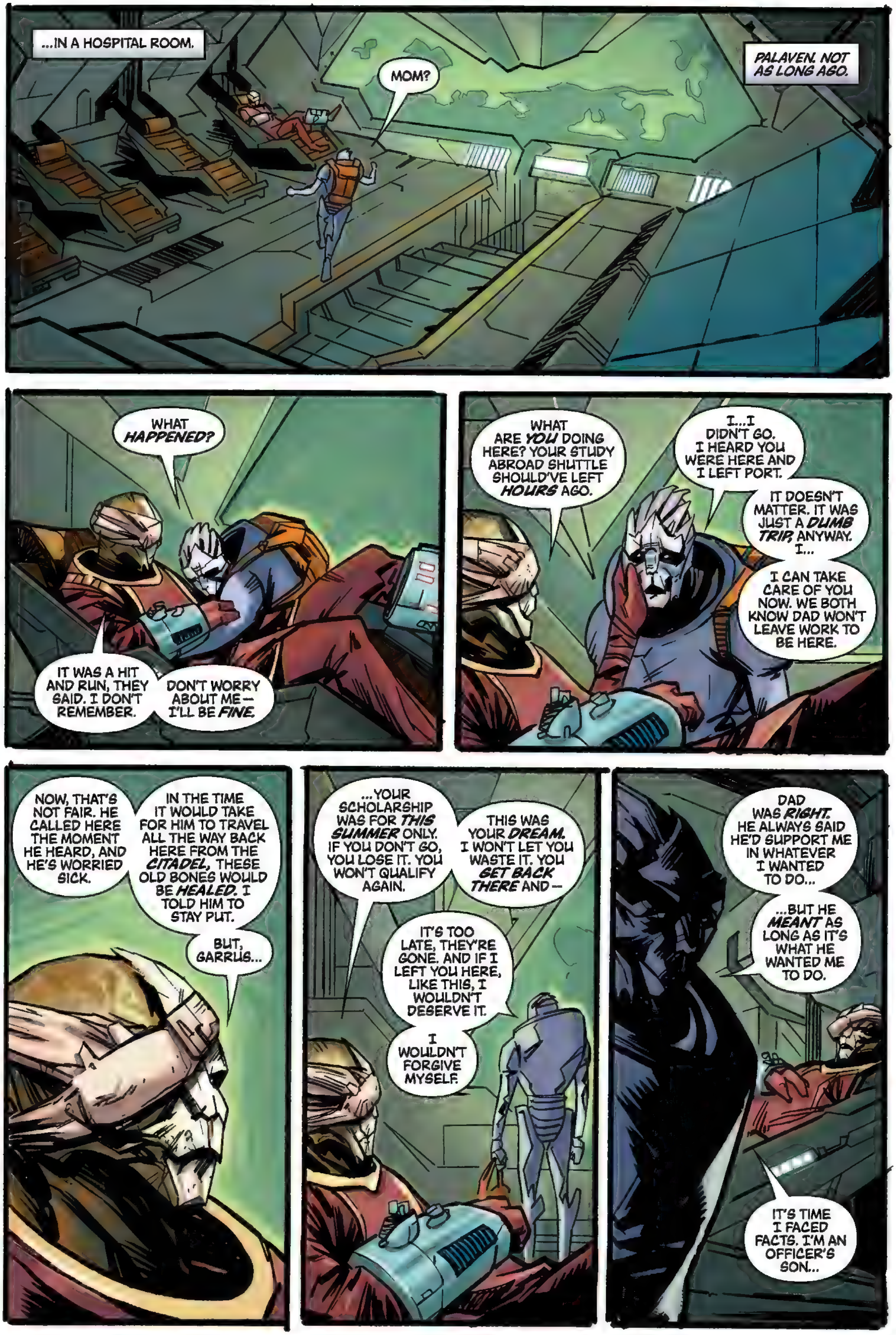
LETTERING
Michael Heisler

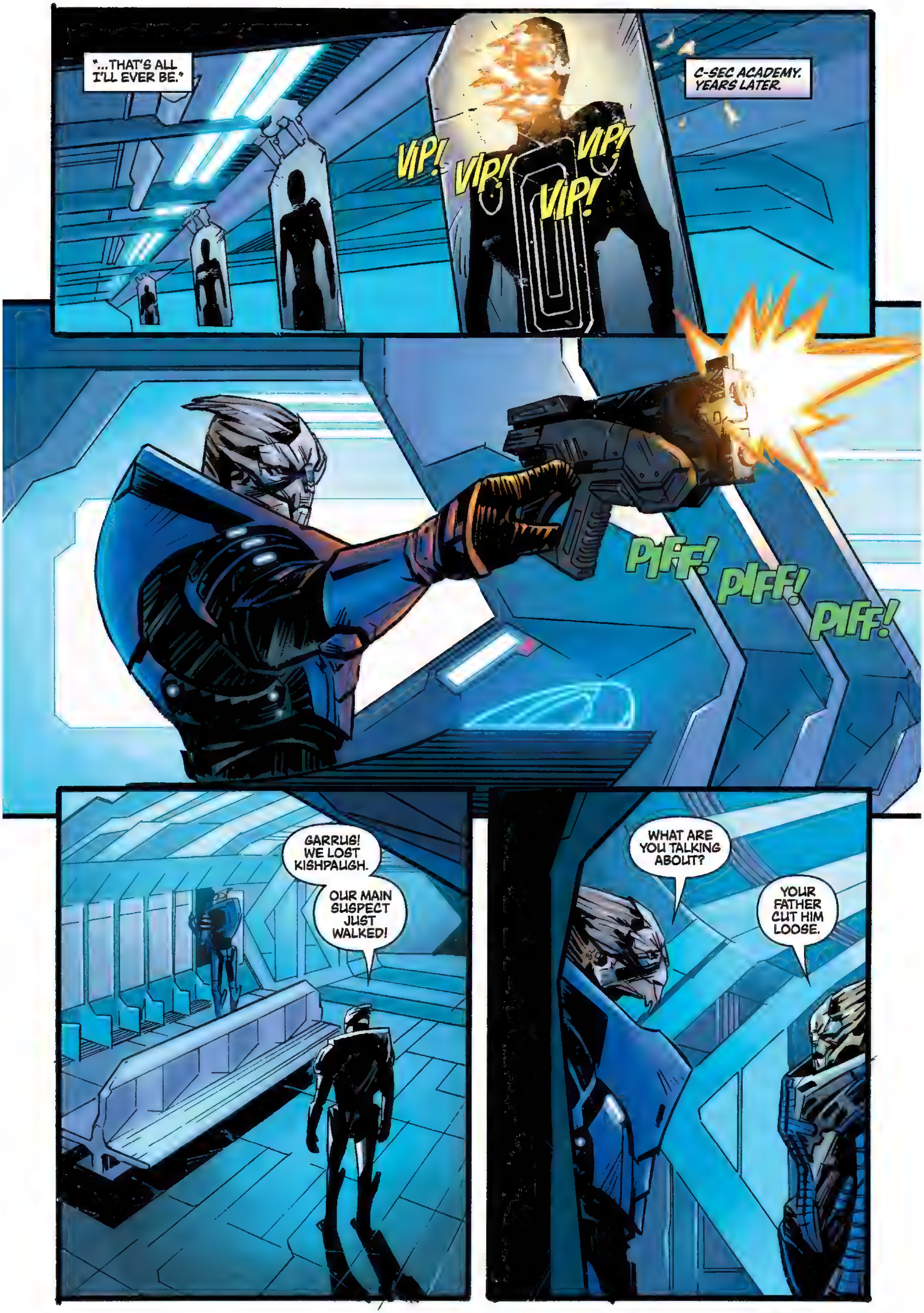

PALAVEN. A LONG TIME AGO.
ARE YOU EVEN LISTENING TO ME, **GARRUS?** TRY AGAIN.
CAN WE STOP FOR A WHILE? MY ARMS HURT.
NOT UNTIL YOU HIT THOSE TARGETS.
NOW. AGAIN.
PIFF! PIFF! PIFF!
VIP!
VIP!
VIP!

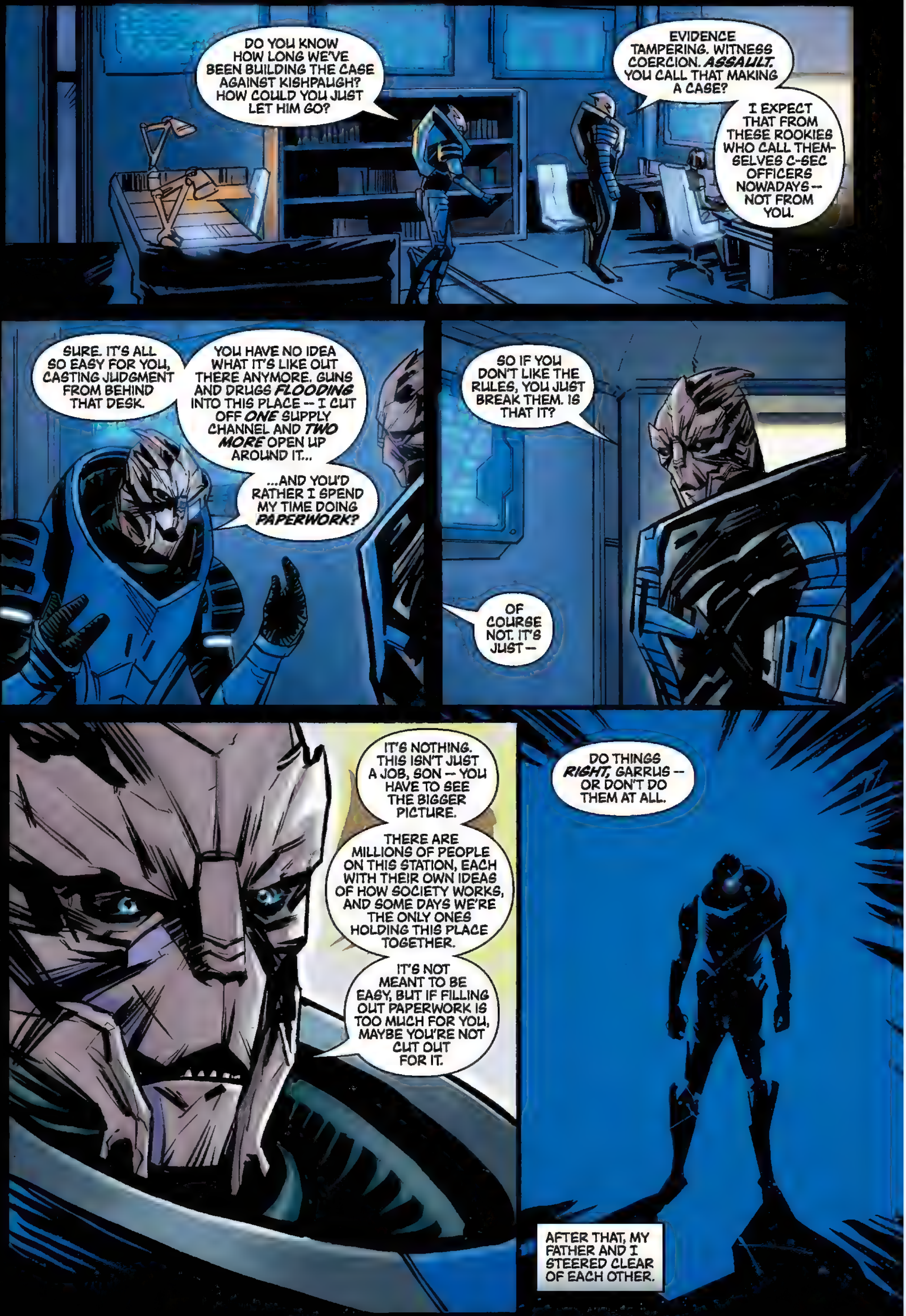

WHY ARE WE DOING THIS? I'M NOT GOING TO GET ANY BETTER.
THEN THIS IS EXACTLY WHEN YOU TRY *HARDER.* THIS IS WHEN YOU PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER AND YOU *DO* IT.
BECAUSE IF YOU STOP NOW -- IF YOU GIVE UP ON SOMETHING WHEN IT GETS HARD -- YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO MAKE IT ANYWHERE IN LIFE.
I'M NOT DOING THIS TO PUNISH YOU.
MY JOB AS YOUR FATHER ISN'T TO MAKE YOUR LIFE *EASY* -- IT'S TO TEACH YOU HOW TO BE AN ADULT.
NOW. AGAIN.
PIFF! PIFF! PIFF!

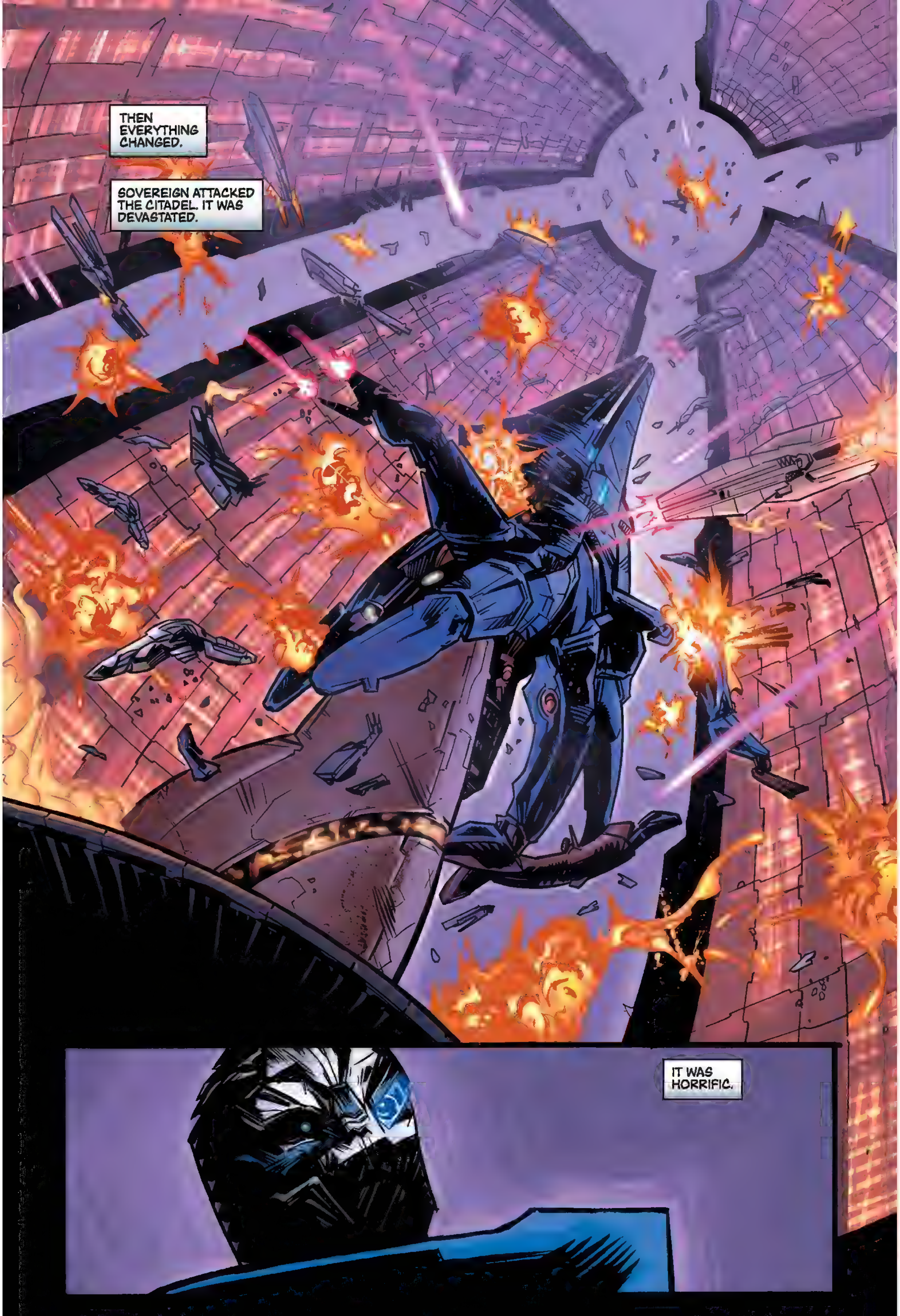

OMEGA. THE PRESENT.
CASUALTIES?
WHAT?
HOW MANY HAVE WE LOST?
YOU MEAN IN TOTAL OR JUST IN THE LAST HOUR?
THIS ISN'T A SIEGE -- IT'S A MASSACRE.
IT'S EMBARRASSING, IS WHAT IT IS.
THAT'S JUST ONE MAN UP THERE. YOU KNOW THAT, RIGHT?
ONE MAN WITH ONE GUN, AND FOR SOME REASON NO ONE HERE IS SMART ENOUGH TO NAIL HIM.
THAT'S BECAUSE HE'S NOT JUST A GUY WITH A RIFLE...

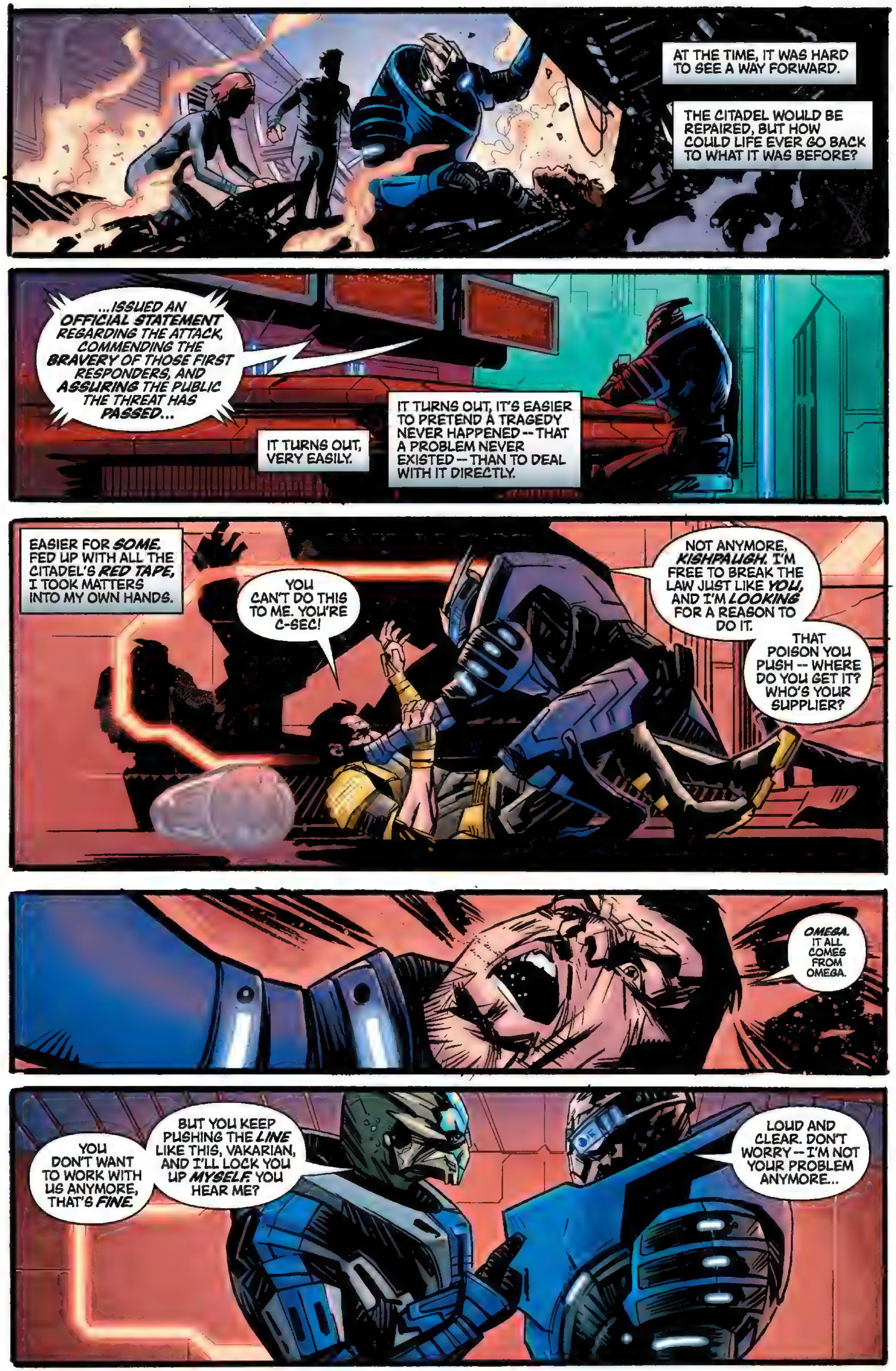

PLIFF!
"...HE'S *ARCHANGEL*."
JUST WHEN I THINK THEY'VE RUN OUT OF BODIES TO THROW AT ME, THE REINFORCEMENTS ARRIVE.
THIS LOOKS LIKE THE END OF THE RUN. GARRUS VAKARIAN'S LAST STAND.
IF THIS *IS* THE END, THEN THIS RECORDING YOU'RE NOW HEARING IS MY FINAL RECKONING. I'M SETTING THINGS STRAIGHT.
BECAUSE WHEN THE OMEGA GANGS TELL THIS STORY, IT WILL ALL BE *LIES*. PROPAGANDA THEY'LL USE AGAINST *ANYONE* WHO DARES STAND UP AGAINST THEIR LAWLESSNESS.
I CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN. EVERYTHING I'VE DONE HERE – EVERYTHING I'VE *STOOD* FOR – BEGAN LONG BEFORE I CAME TO THIS DAMN STATION. IT ALL STARTED...

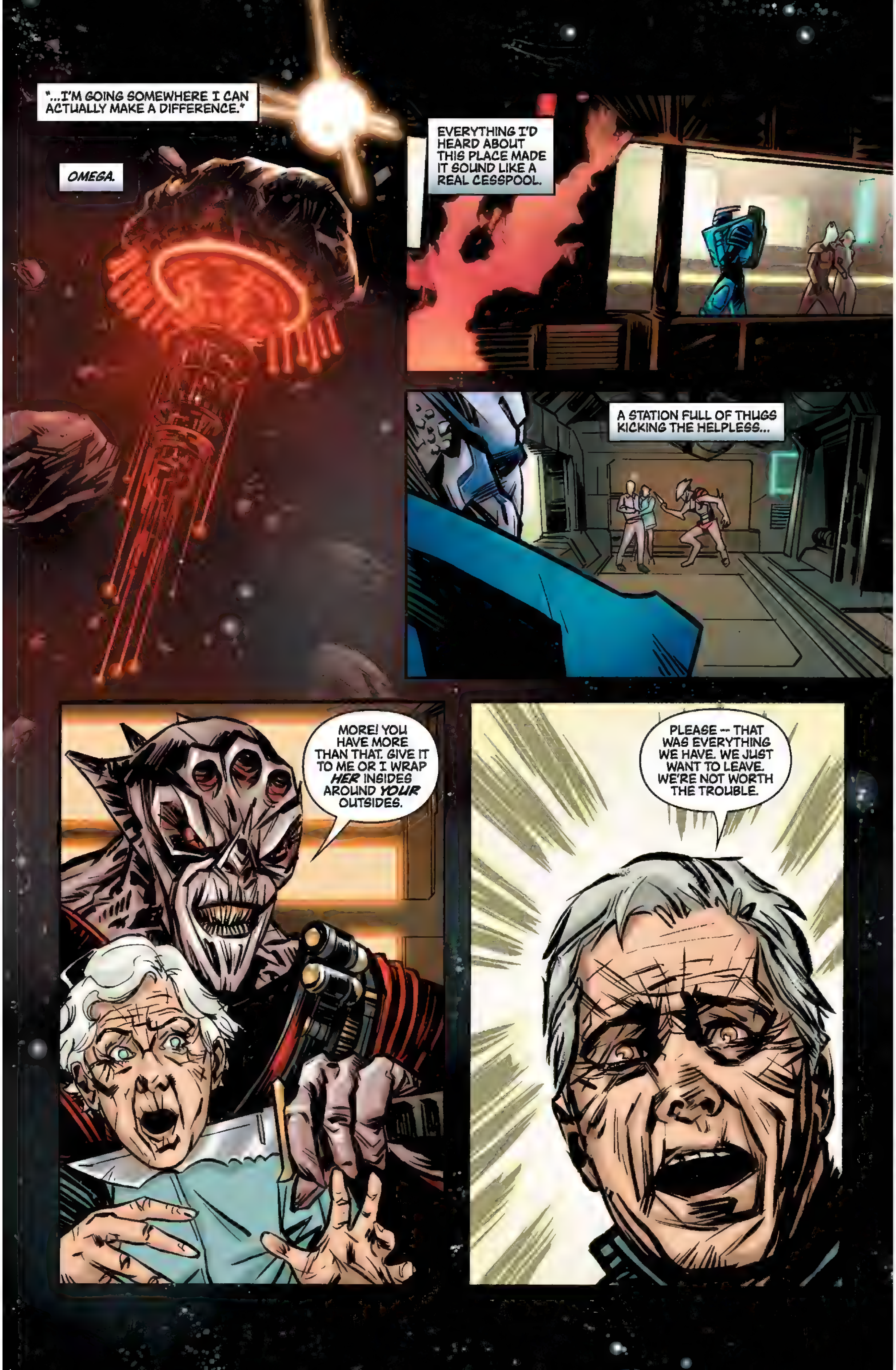

...IN A HOSPITAL ROOM.
PALAVEN. NOT AS LONG AGO.
MOM?
WHAT *HAPPENED?*
IT WAS A HIT AND RUN, THEY SAID. I DON'T REMEMBER.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME -- I'LL BE *FINE.*
WHAT ARE *YOU* DOING HERE? YOUR STUDY ABROAD SHUTTLE SHOULD'VE LEFT *HOURS* AGO.
I...I DIDN'T GO. I HEARD YOU WERE HERE AND I LEFT PORT.
IT DOESN'T MATTER. IT WAS JUST A *DUMB TRIP,* ANYWAY. I...
I CAN TAKE CARE OF YOU NOW. WE BOTH KNOW DAD WON'T LEAVE WORK TO BE HERE.
NOW, THAT'S NOT FAIR. HE CALLED HERE THE MOMENT HE HEARD, AND HE'S WORRIED SICK.
IN THE TIME IT WOULD TAKE FOR HIM TO TRAVEL ALL THE WAY BACK HERE FROM THE *CITADEL,* THESE OLD BONES WOULD BE *HEALED.* I TOLD HIM TO STAY PUT.
BUT, GARRUS...
...YOUR SCHOLARSHIP WAS FOR *THIS SUMMER* ONLY. IF YOU DON'T GO, YOU LOSE IT. YOU WON'T QUALIFY AGAIN.
THIS WAS YOUR *DREAM.* I WON'T LET YOU WASTE IT. YOU *GET BACK THERE* AND --
IT'S TOO LATE, THEY'RE GONE. AND IF I LEFT YOU HERE, LIKE THIS, I WOULDN'T DESERVE IT.
I WOULDN'T FORGIVE MYSELF.
DAD WAS *RIGHT.* HE ALWAYS SAID HE'D SUPPORT ME IN WHATEVER I WANTED TO DO...
...BUT HE *MEANT* AS LONG AS IT'S WHAT HE WANTED ME TO DO.
IT'S TIME I FACED FACTS. I'M AN OFFICER'S SON...

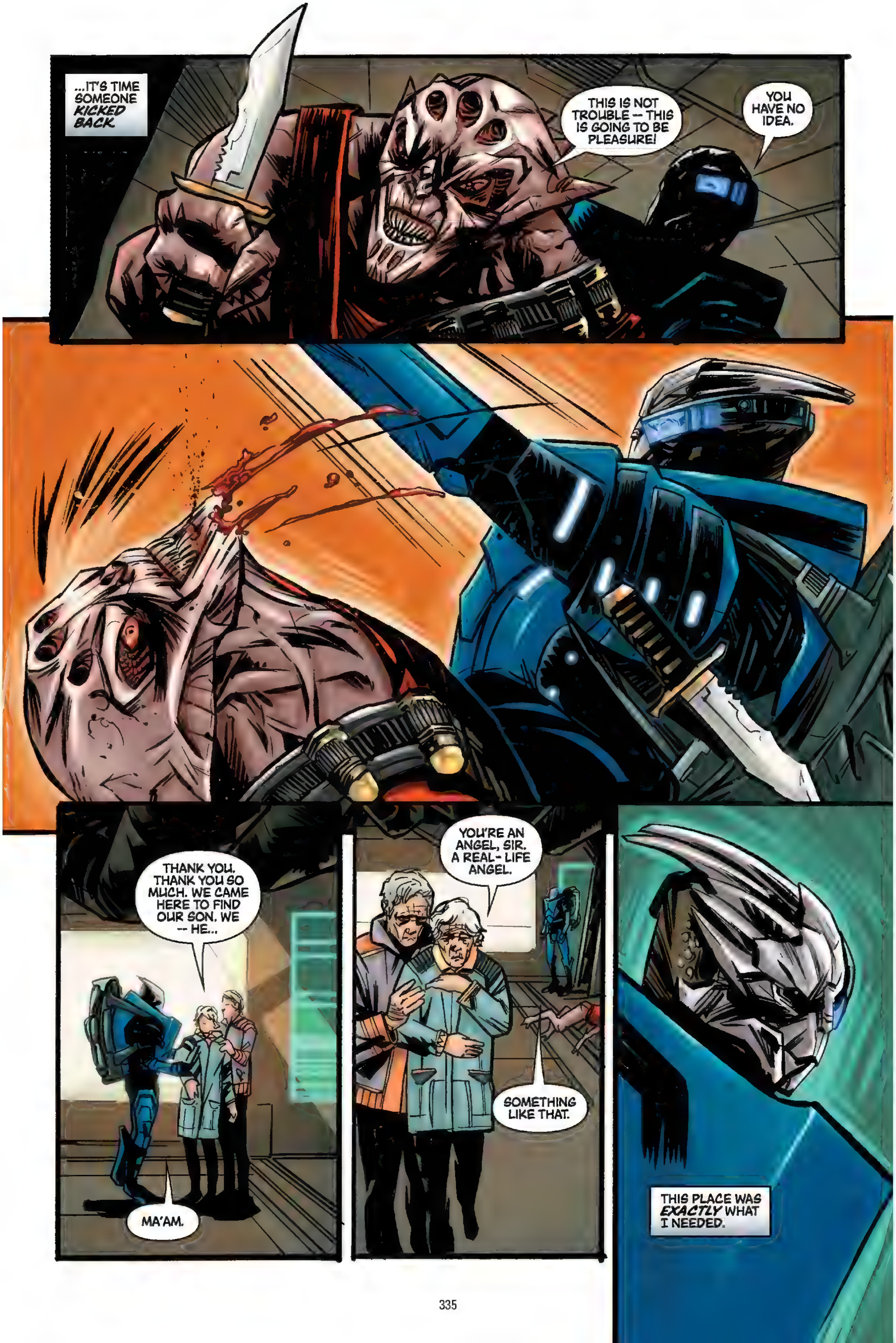

"...THAT'S ALL I'LL EVER BE."
C-SEC ACADEMY. YEARS LATER.
VIP! VIP! VIP! VIP!
PIFF! PIFF! PIFF!
GARRUS! WE LOST KISHPAUGH.
OUR MAIN SUSPECT JUST WALKED!
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
YOUR FATHER CUT HIM LOOSE.

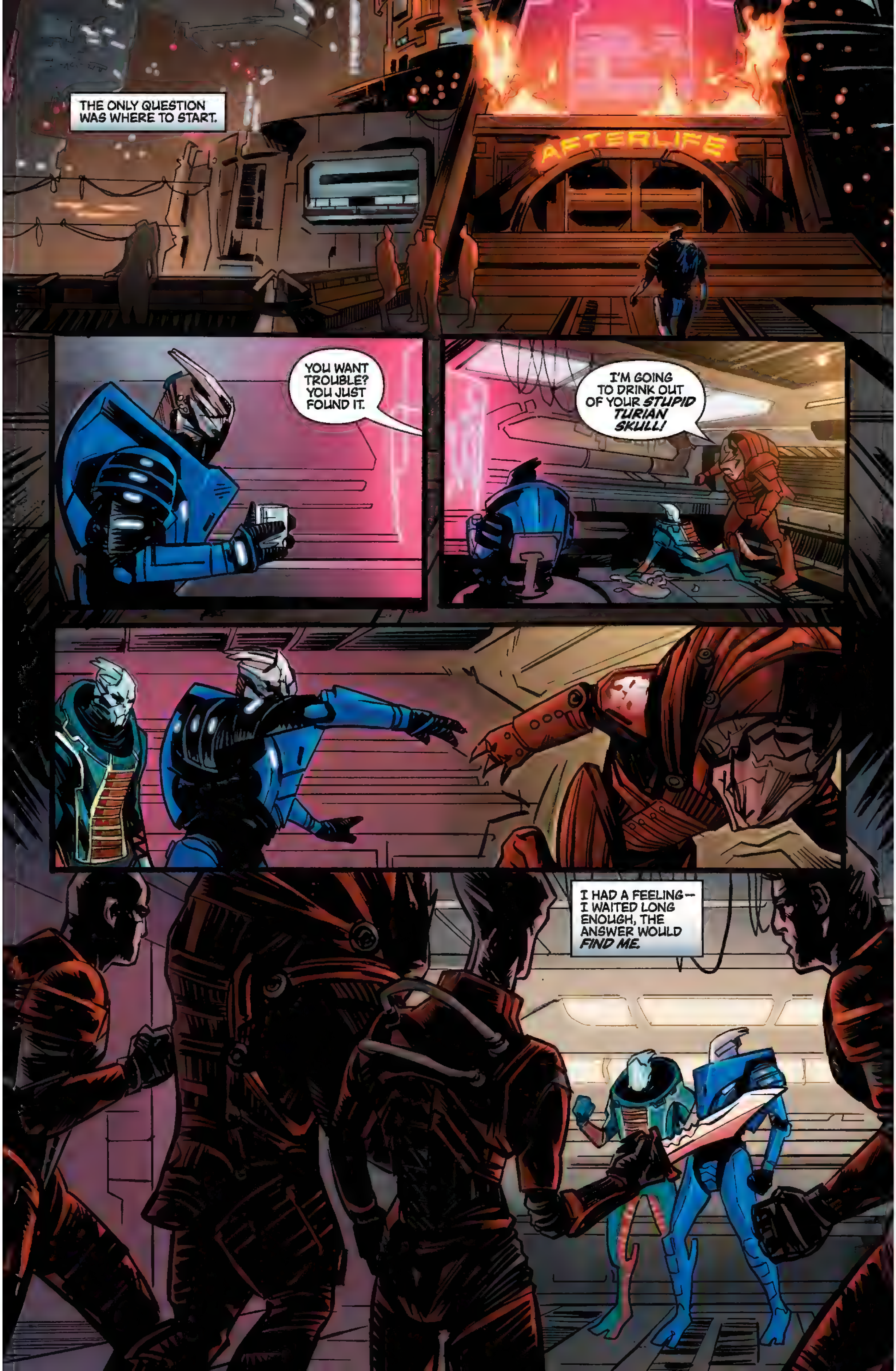

DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG WE'VE BEEN BUILDING THE CASE AGAINST KISHPAUGH? HOW COULD YOU JUST LET HIM GO?
EVIDENCE TAMPERING. WITNESS COERCION. *ASSAULT.* YOU CALL THAT MAKING A CASE?
I EXPECT THAT FROM THESE ROOKIES WHO CALL THEMSELVES C-SEC OFFICERS NOWADAYS -- NOT FROM YOU.
SURE. IT'S ALL SO EASY FOR YOU, CASTING JUDGMENT FROM BEHIND THAT DESK.
YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IT'S LIKE OUT THERE ANYMORE. GUNS AND DRUGS *FLOODING* INTO THIS PLACE -- I CUT OFF *ONE* SUPPLY CHANNEL AND *TWO MORE* OPEN UP AROUND IT...
...AND YOU'D RATHER I SPEND MY TIME DOING *PAPERWORK?*
SO IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RULES, YOU JUST BREAK THEM. IS THAT IT?
OF COURSE NOT. IT'S JUST --
IT'S NOTHING. THIS ISN'T JUST A JOB, SON -- YOU HAVE TO SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE.
THERE ARE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE ON THIS STATION, EACH WITH THEIR OWN IDEAS OF HOW SOCIETY WORKS, AND SOME DAYS WE'RE THE ONLY ONES HOLDING THIS PLACE TOGETHER.
IT'S NOT MEANT TO BE EASY, BUT IF FILLING OUT PAPERWORK IS TOO MUCH FOR YOU, MAYBE YOU'RE NOT CUT OUT FOR IT.
DO THINGS *RIGHT,* GARRUS -- OR DON'T DO THEM AT ALL.
AFTER THAT, MY FATHER AND I STEERED CLEAR OF EACH OTHER.

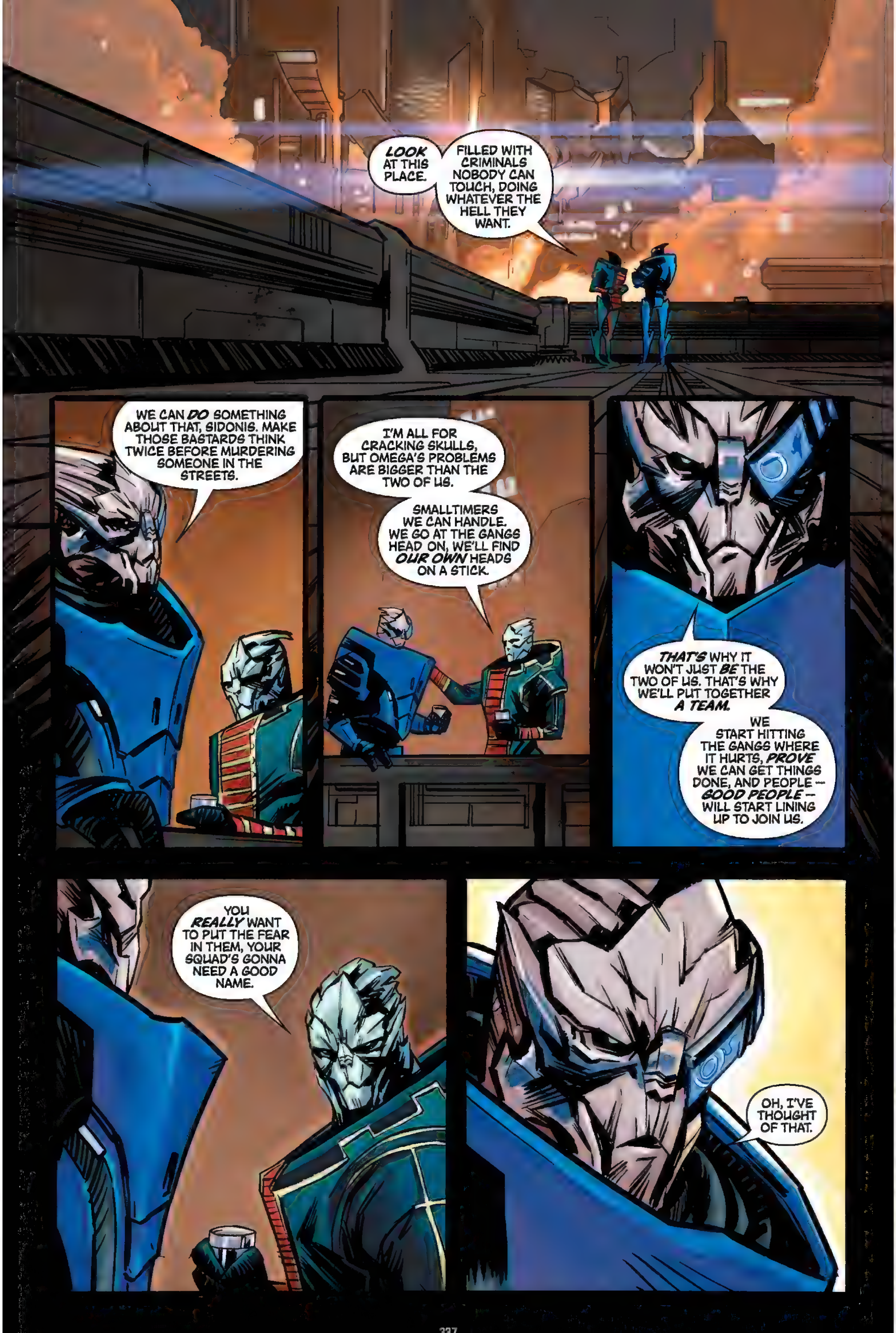

THEN EVERYTHING CHANGED.
SOVEREIGN ATTACKED THE CITADEL. IT WAS DEVASTATED.
IT WAS HORRIFIC.

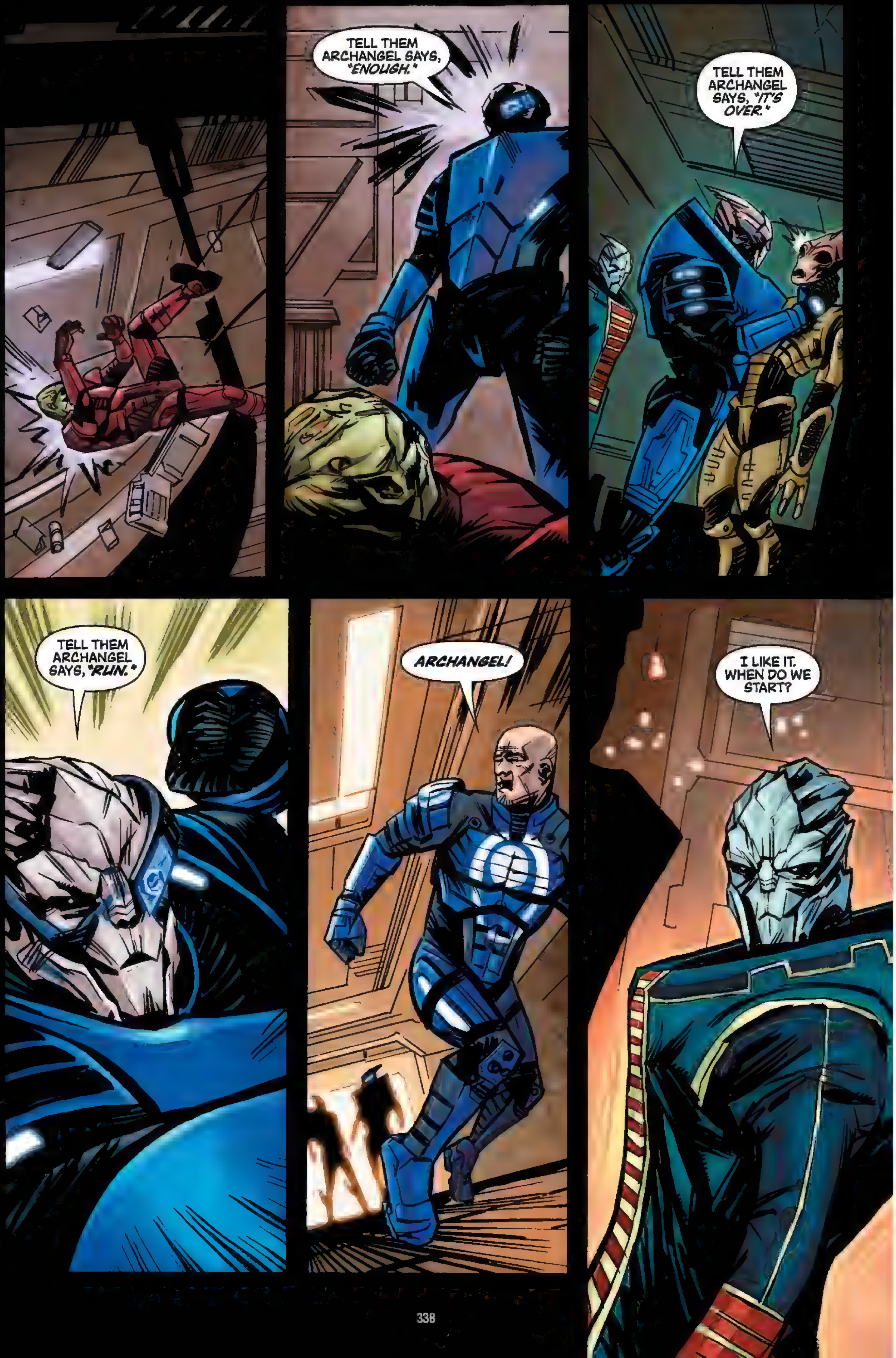

AT THE TIME, IT WAS HARD TO SEE A WAY FORWARD.
THE CITADEL WOULD BE REPAIRED, BUT HOW COULD LIFE EVER GO BACK TO WHAT IT WAS BEFORE?
...ISSUED AN **OFFICIAL STATEMENT** REGARDING THE ATTACK, COMMENDING THE **BRAVERY** OF THOSE FIRST RESPONDERS, AND **ASSURING** THE PUBLIC THE THREAT HAS **PASSED**...
IT TURNS OUT, VERY EASILY.
IT TURNS OUT, IT'S EASIER TO PRETEND A TRAGEDY NEVER HAPPENED -- THAT A PROBLEM NEVER EXISTED -- THAN TO DEAL WITH IT DIRECTLY.
EASIER FOR ***SOME.*** FED UP WITH ALL THE CITADEL'S ***RED TAPE,*** I TOOK MATTERS INTO MY OWN HANDS.
YOU CAN'T DO THIS TO ME. YOU'RE C-SEC!
NOT ANYMORE, ***KISHPAUGH.*** I'M FREE TO BREAK THE LAW JUST LIKE ***YOU,*** AND I'M ***LOOKING*** FOR A REASON TO DO IT.
THAT POISON YOU PUSH -- WHERE DO YOU GET IT? WHO'S YOUR SUPPLIER?
OMEGA. IT ALL COMES FROM OMEGA.
YOU DON'T WANT TO WORK WITH US ANYMORE, THAT'S ***FINE.***
BUT YOU KEEP PUSHING THE ***LINE*** LIKE THIS, VAKARIAN, AND I'LL LOCK YOU UP ***MYSELF.*** YOU HEAR ME?
LOUD AND CLEAR. DON'T WORRY -- I'M NOT YOUR PROBLEM ANYMORE...

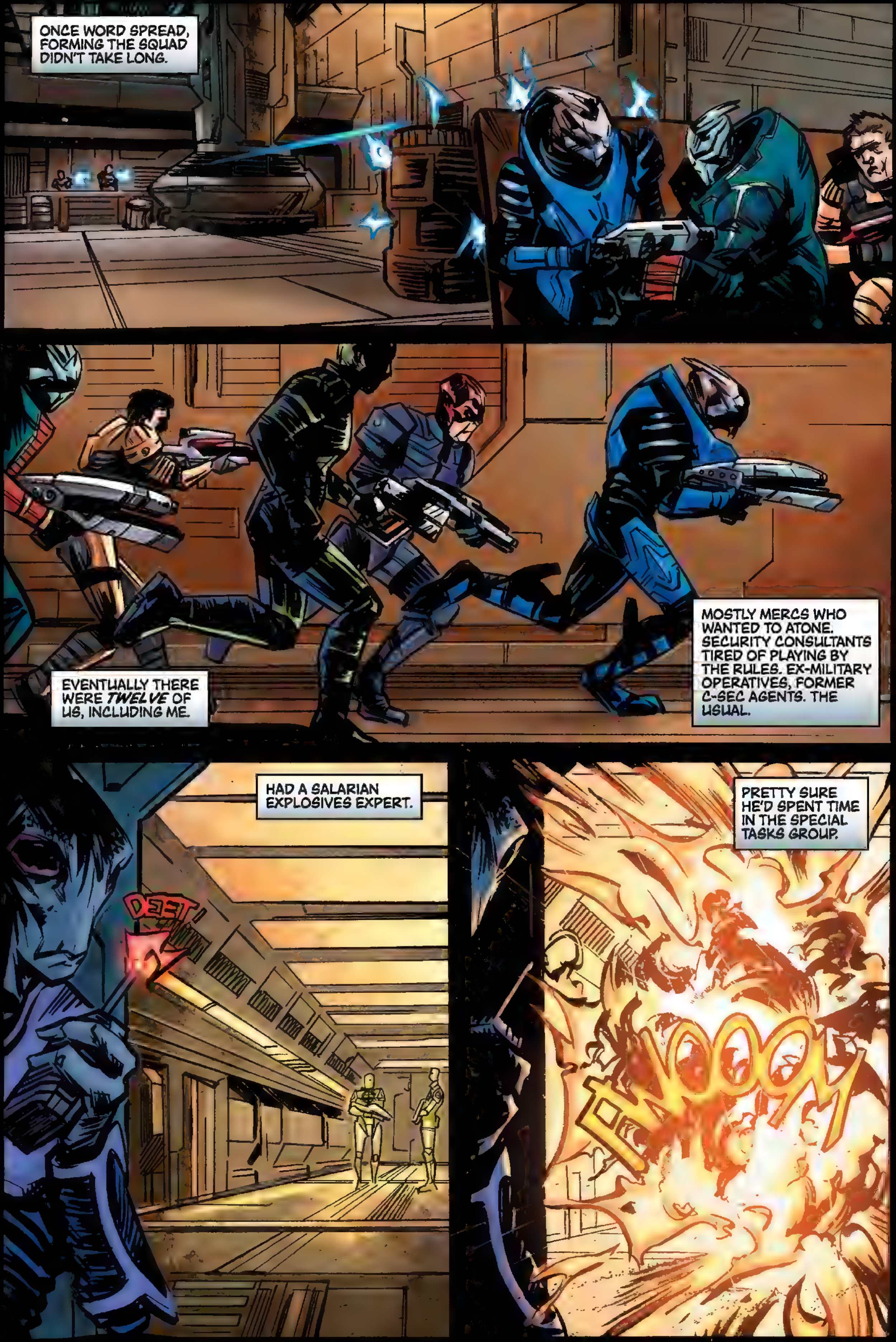

"...I'M GOING SOMEWHERE I CAN ACTUALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE."
OMEGA.
EVERYTHING I'D HEARD ABOUT THIS PLACE MADE IT SOUND LIKE A REAL CESSPOOL.
A STATION FULL OF THUGS KICKING THE HELPLESS...
MORE! YOU HAVE MORE THAN THAT. GIVE IT TO ME OR I WRAP *HER* INSIDES AROUND *YOUR* OUTSIDES.
PLEASE -- THAT WAS EVERYTHING WE HAVE. WE JUST WANT TO LEAVE. WE'RE NOT WORTH THE TROUBLE.

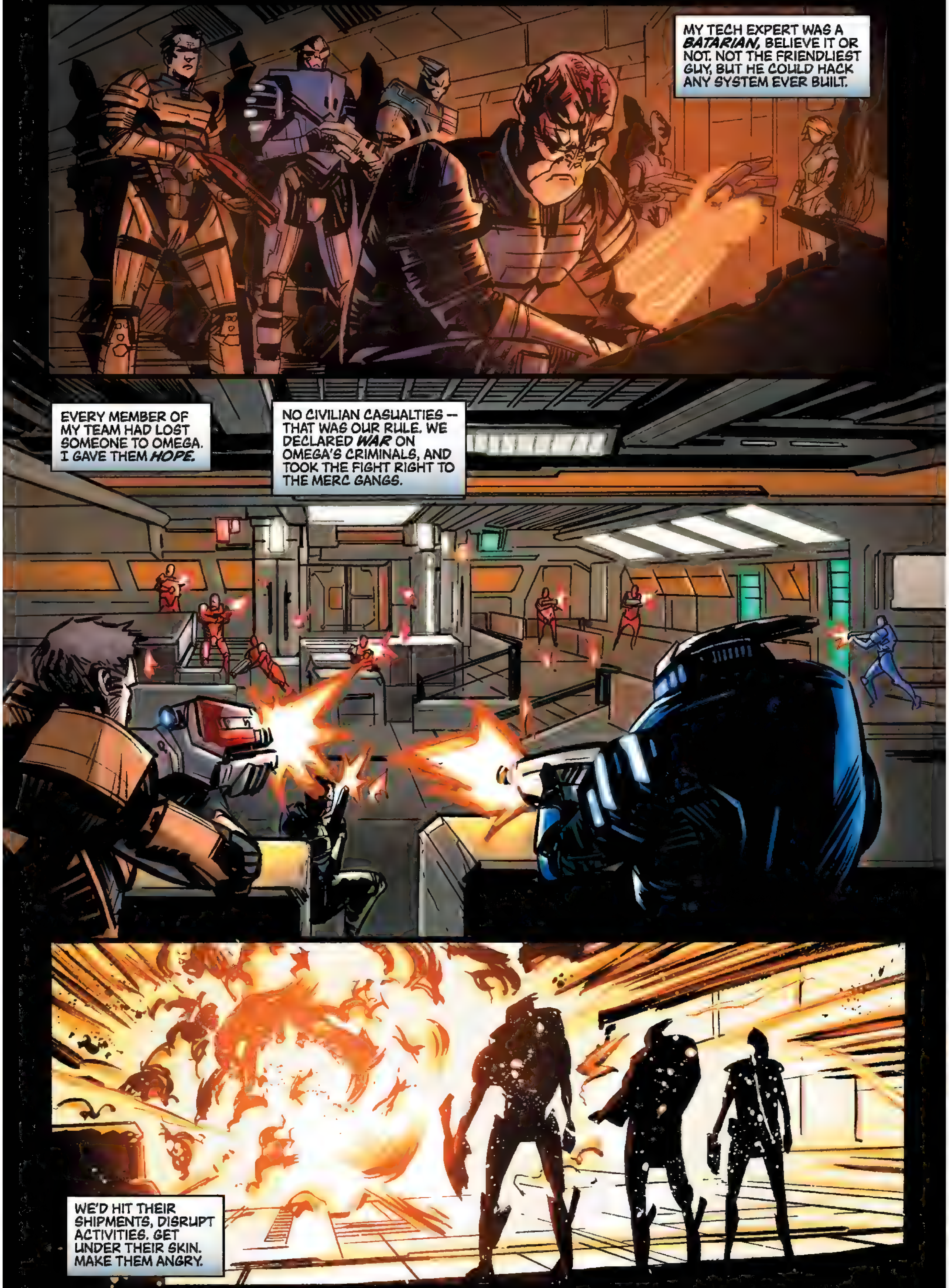

...IT'S TIME SOMEONE *KICKED BACK.*
THIS IS NOT TROUBLE -- THIS IS GOING TO BE PLEASURE!
YOU HAVE NO IDEA.
THANK YOU. THANK YOU SO MUCH. WE CAME HERE TO FIND OUR SON. WE -- HE...
MA'AM.
YOU'RE AN ANGEL, SIR. A REAL-LIFE ANGEL.
SOMETHING LIKE THAT.
THIS PLACE WAS *EXACTLY* WHAT I NEEDED.

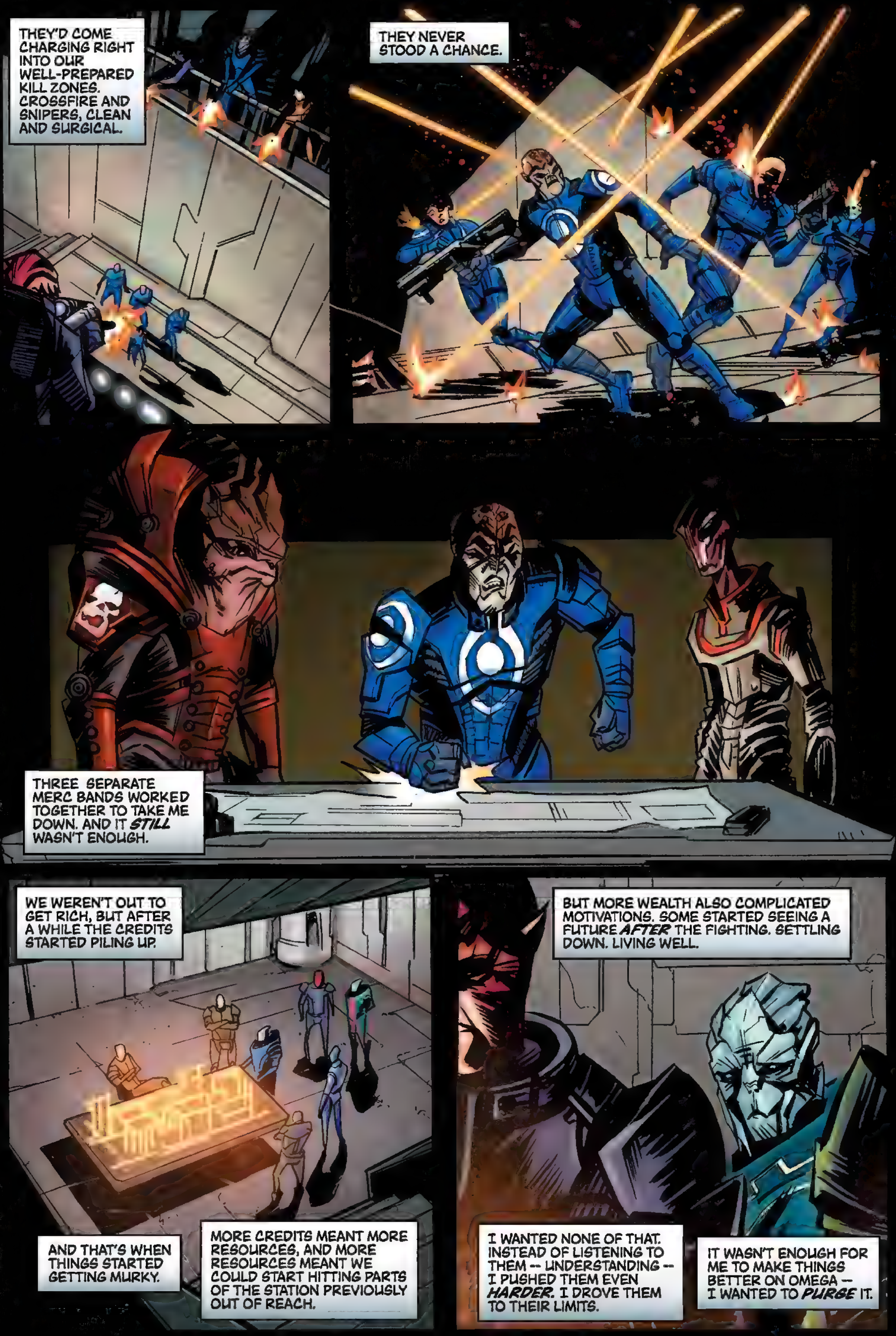

THE ONLY QUESTION WAS WHERE TO START.
AFTERLIFE
YOU WANT TROUBLE? YOU JUST FOUND IT.
I'M GOING TO DRINK OUT OF YOUR *STUPID TURIAN SKULL!*
I HAD A FEELING-- I WAITED LONG ENOUGH, THE ANSWER WOULD *FIND ME.*

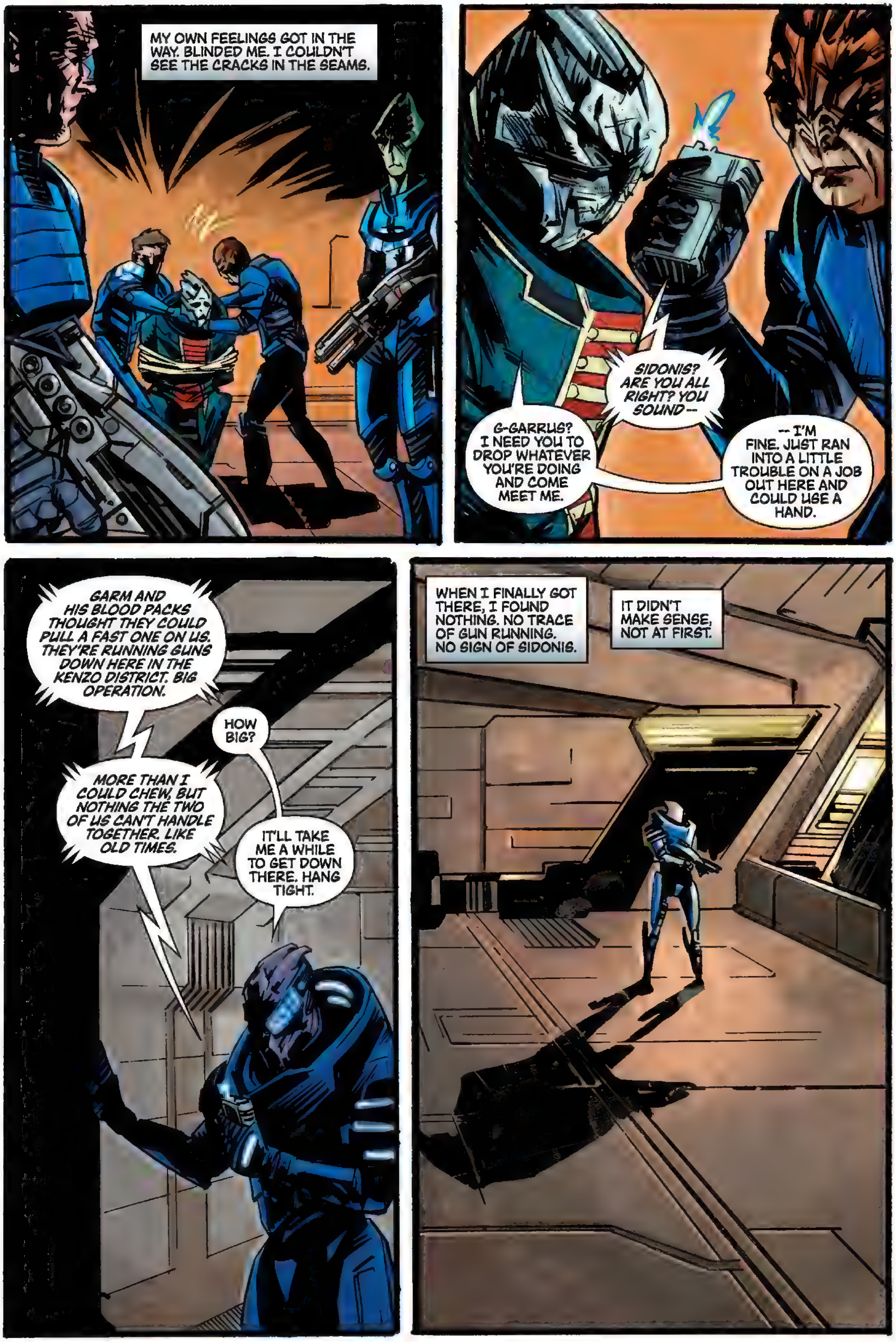

LOOK AT THIS PLACE.
FILLED WITH CRIMINALS NOBODY CAN TOUCH, DOING WHATEVER THE HELL THEY WANT.
WE CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT, SIDONIS. MAKE THOSE BASTARDS THINK TWICE BEFORE MURDERING SOMEONE IN THE STREETS.
I'M ALL FOR CRACKING SKULLS, BUT OMEGA'S PROBLEMS ARE BIGGER THAN THE TWO OF US.
SMALLTIMERS WE CAN HANDLE. WE GO AT THE GANGS HEAD ON, WE'LL FIND OUR OWN HEADS ON A STICK.
THAT'S WHY IT WON'T JUST BE THE TWO OF US. THAT'S WHY WE'LL PUT TOGETHER A TEAM.
WE START HITTING THE GANGS WHERE IT HURTS, PROVE WE CAN GET THINGS DONE, AND PEOPLE -- GOOD PEOPLE -- WILL START LINING UP TO JOIN US.
YOU REALLY WANT TO PUT THE FEAR IN THEM, YOUR SQUAD'S GONNA NEED A GOOD NAME.
OH, I'VE THOUGHT OF THAT.

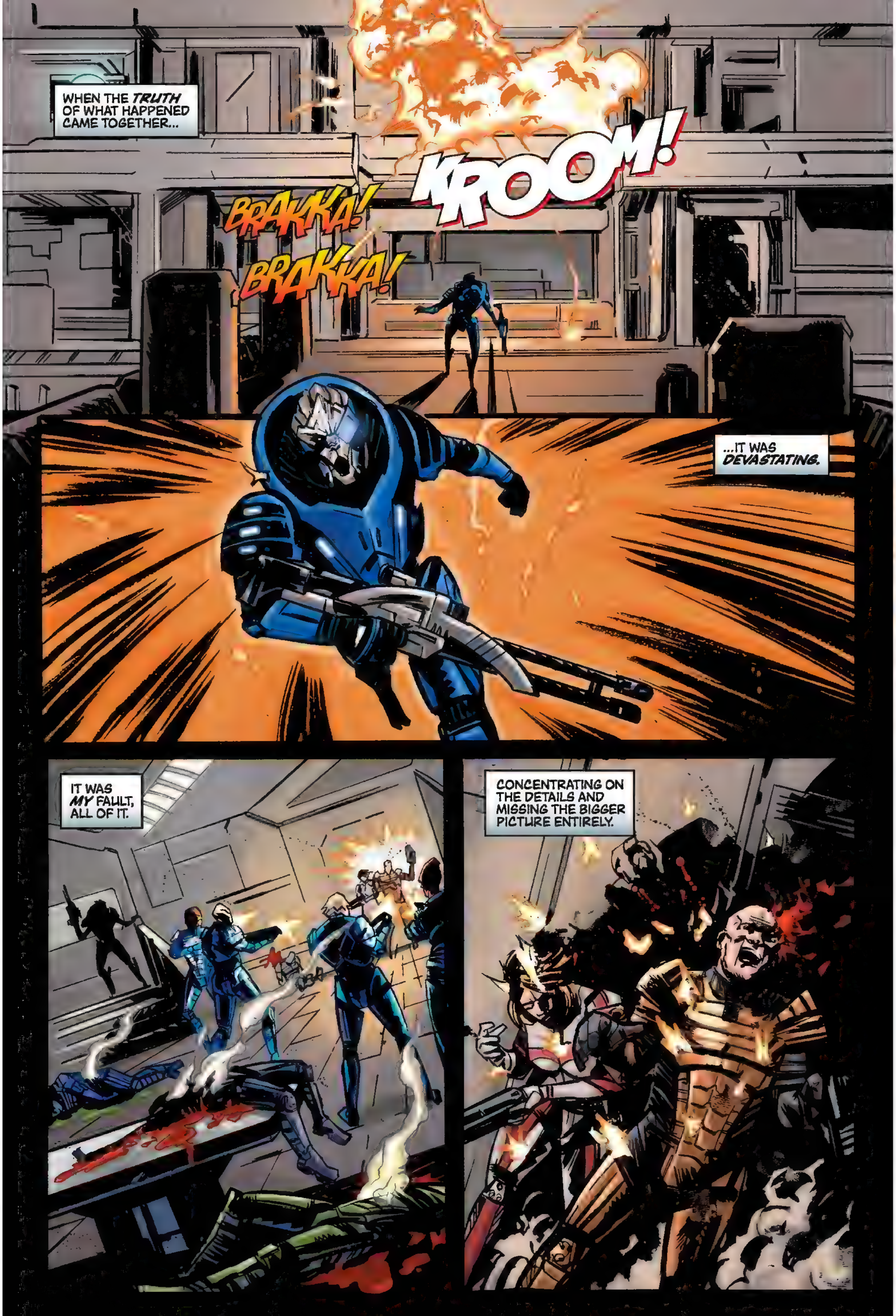

TELL THEM ARCHANGEL SAYS, "ENOUGH."
TELL THEM ARCHANGEL SAYS, "IT'S OVER."
TELL THEM ARCHANGEL SAYS, "RUN."
ARCHANGEL!
I LIKE IT. WHEN DO WE START?

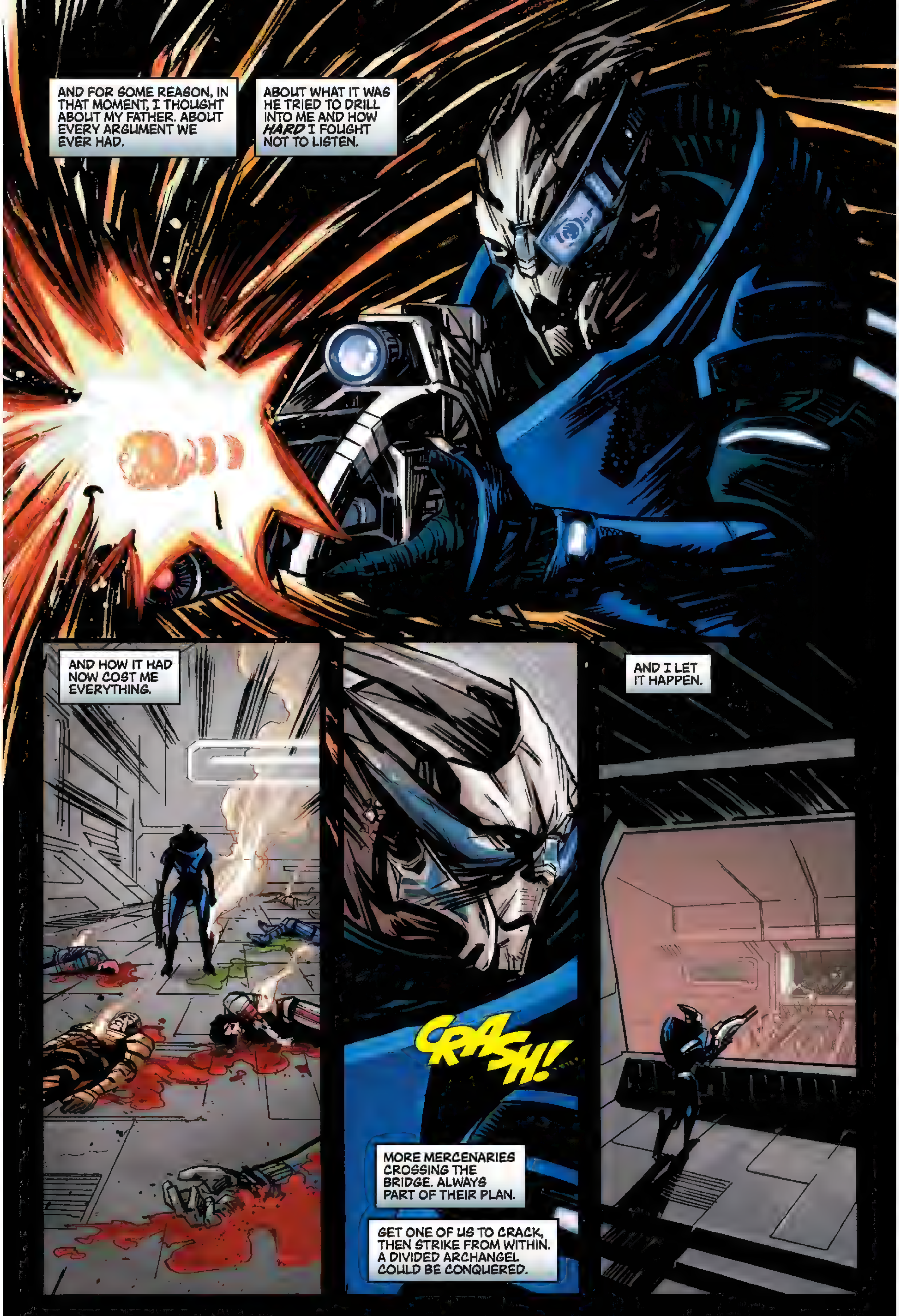

ONCE WORD SPREAD, FORMING THE SQUAD DIDN'T TAKE LONG.
EVENTUALLY THERE WERE *TWELVE* OF US, INCLUDING ME.
MOSTLY MERCS WHO WANTED TO ATONE. SECURITY CONSULTANTS TIRED OF PLAYING BY THE RULES. EX-MILITARY OPERATIVES, FORMER C-SEC AGENTS. THE USUAL.
HAD A SALARIAN EXPLOSIVES EXPERT.
DEET!
PRETTY SURE HE'D SPENT TIME IN THE SPECIAL TASKS GROUP.
BOOOM

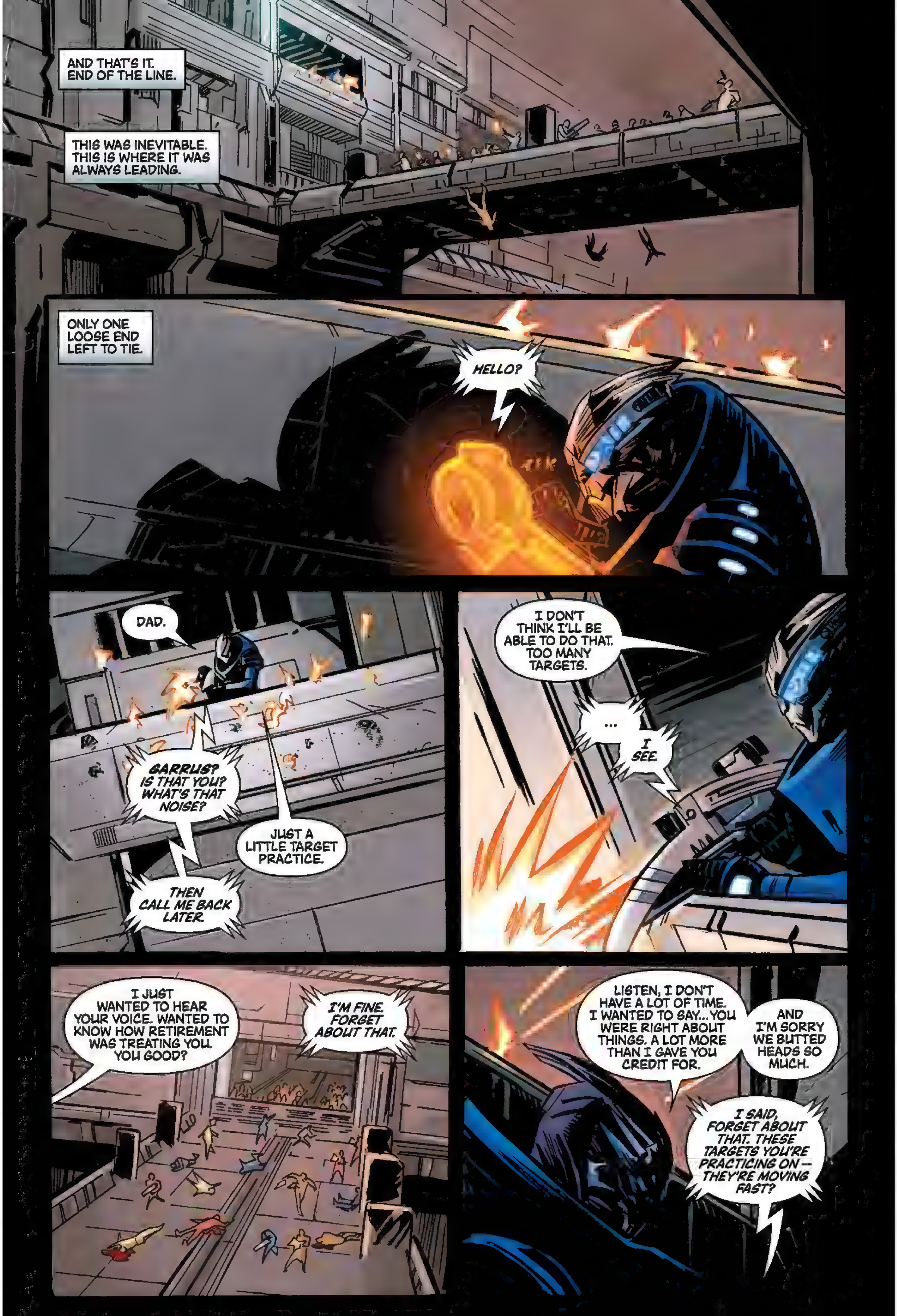

MY TECH EXPERT WAS A *BATARIAN,* BELIEVE IT OR NOT. NOT THE FRIENDLIEST GUY, BUT HE COULD HACK ANY SYSTEM EVER BUILT.
EVERY MEMBER OF MY TEAM HAD LOST SOMEONE TO OMEGA. I GAVE THEM *HOPE.*
NO CIVILIAN CASUALTIES -- THAT WAS OUR RULE. WE DECLARED *WAR* ON OMEGA'S CRIMINALS, AND TOOK THE FIGHT RIGHT TO THE MERC GANGS.
WE'D HIT THEIR SHIPMENTS, DISRUPT ACTIVITIES. GET UNDER THEIR SKIN. MAKE THEM ANGRY.


THEY'D COME CHARGING RIGHT INTO OUR WELL-PREPARED KILL ZONES. CROSSFIRE AND SNIPERS, CLEAN AND SURGICAL.
THEY NEVER STOOD A CHANCE.
THREE SEPARATE MERC BANDS WORKED TOGETHER TO TAKE ME DOWN. AND IT *STILL* WASN'T ENOUGH.
WE WEREN'T OUT TO GET RICH, BUT AFTER A WHILE THE CREDITS STARTED PILING UP.
AND THAT'S WHEN THINGS STARTED GETTING MURKY.
MORE CREDITS MEANT MORE RESOURCES, AND MORE RESOURCES MEANT WE COULD START HITTING PARTS OF THE STATION PREVIOUSLY OUT OF REACH.
BUT MORE WEALTH ALSO COMPLICATED MOTIVATIONS. SOME STARTED SEEING A FUTURE *AFTER* THE FIGHTING. SETTLING DOWN. LIVING WELL.
I WANTED NONE OF THAT. INSTEAD OF LISTENING TO THEM -- UNDERSTANDING -- I PUSHED THEM EVEN *HARDER*. I DROVE THEM TO THEIR LIMITS.
IT WASN'T ENOUGH FOR ME TO MAKE THINGS BETTER ON OMEGA -- I WANTED TO *PURGE* IT.


MY OWN FEELINGS GOT IN THE WAY. BLINDED ME. I COULDN'T SEE THE CRACKS IN THE SEAMS.
SIDONIS? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT? YOU SOUND--
G-GARRUS? I NEED YOU TO DROP WHATEVER YOU'RE DOING AND COME MEET ME.
-- I'M FINE. JUST RAN INTO A LITTLE TROUBLE ON A JOB OUT HERE AND COULD USE A HAND.
GARM AND HIS BLOOD PACKS THOUGHT THEY COULD PULL A FAST ONE ON US. THEY'RE RUNNING GUNS DOWN HERE IN THE KENZO DISTRICT. BIG OPERATION.
HOW BIG?
MORE THAN I COULD CHEW, BUT NOTHING THE TWO OF US CAN'T HANDLE TOGETHER. LIKE OLD TIMES.
IT'LL TAKE ME A WHILE TO GET DOWN THERE. HANG TIGHT.
WHEN I FINALLY GOT THERE, I FOUND NOTHING. NO TRACE OF GUN RUNNING. NO SIGN OF SIDONIS.
IT DIDN'T MAKE SENSE, NOT AT FIRST.


WHEN THE *TRUTH* OF WHAT HAPPENED CAME TOGETHER...
KROOM!
BRAKKA! BRAKKA!
...IT WAS *DEVASTATING.*
IT WAS *MY* FAULT, ALL OF IT.
CONCENTRATING ON THE DETAILS AND MISSING THE BIGGER PICTURE ENTIRELY.


AND FOR SOME REASON, IN THAT MOMENT, I THOUGHT ABOUT MY FATHER. ABOUT EVERY ARGUMENT WE EVER HAD.
ABOUT WHAT IT WAS HE TRIED TO DRILL INTO ME AND HOW *HARD* I FOUGHT NOT TO LISTEN.
AND HOW IT HAD NOW COST ME EVERYTHING.
CRASH!
MORE MERCENARIES CROSSING THE BRIDGE. ALWAYS PART OF THEIR PLAN.
GET ONE OF US TO CRACK, THEN STRIKE FROM WITHIN. A DIVIDED ARCHANGEL COULD BE CONQUERED.
AND I LET IT HAPPEN.


AND THAT'S IT. END OF THE LINE.
THIS WAS INEVITABLE. THIS IS WHERE IT WAS ALWAYS LEADING.
ONLY ONE LOOSE END LEFT TO TIE.
HELLO?
TEK
DAD.
GARRUS? IS THAT YOU? WHAT'S THAT NOISE?
JUST A LITTLE TARGET PRACTICE.
THEN CALL ME BACK LATER.
I DON'T THINK I'LL BE ABLE TO DO THAT. TOO MANY TARGETS.
...
I SEE.
I JUST WANTED TO HEAR YOUR VOICE. WANTED TO KNOW HOW RETIREMENT WAS TREATING YOU. YOU GOOD?
I'M FINE. FORGET ABOUT THAT.
LISTEN, I DON'T HAVE A LOT OF TIME. I WANTED TO SAY... YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT THINGS. A LOT MORE THAN I GAVE YOU CREDIT FOR.
AND I'M SORRY WE BUTTED HEADS SO MUCH.
I SAID, FORGET ABOUT THAT. THESE TARGETS YOU'RE PRACTICING ON -- THEY'RE MOVING FAST?

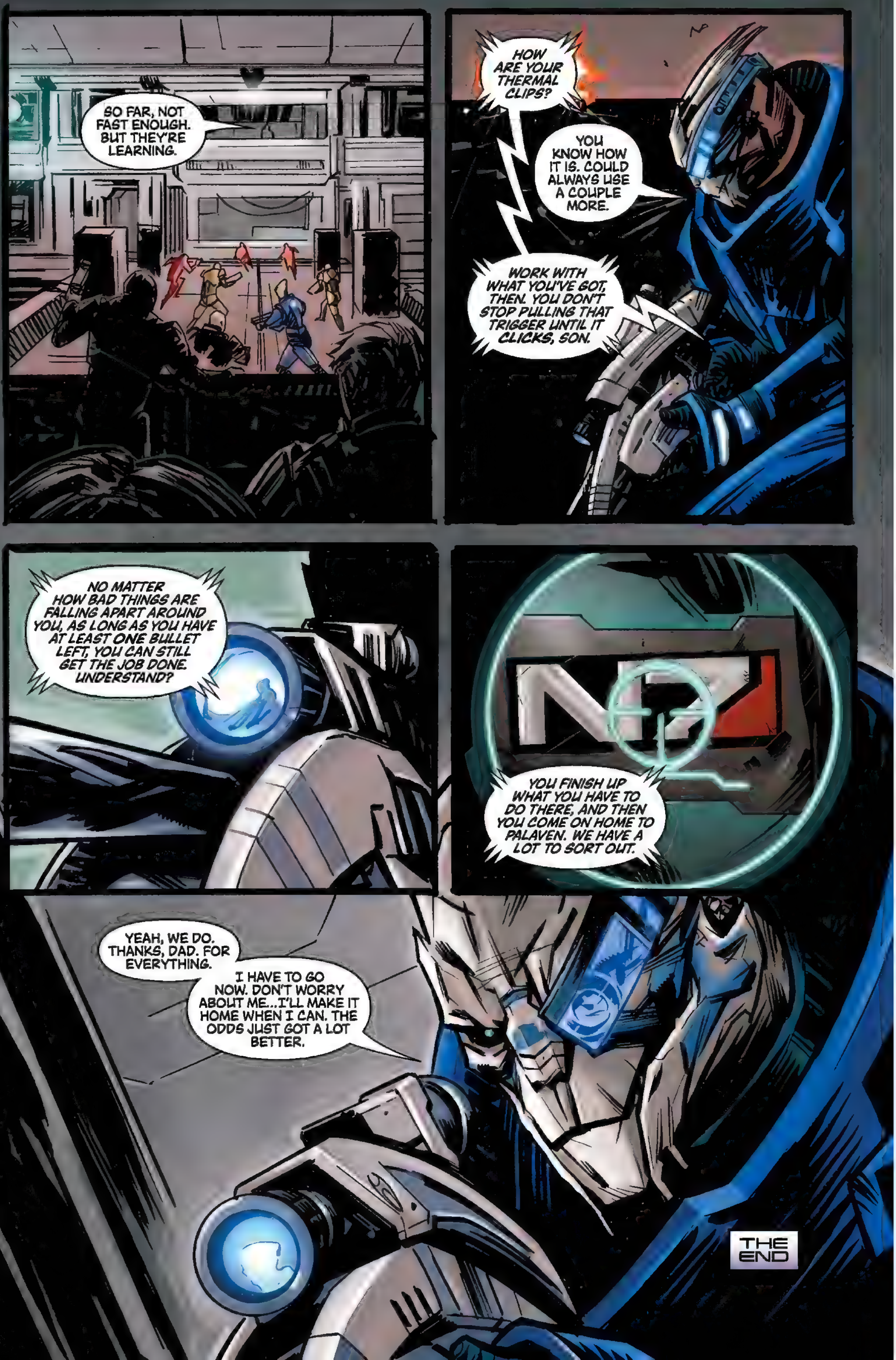

SO FAR, NOT FAST ENOUGH. BUT THEY'RE LEARNING.
HOW ARE YOUR THERMAL CLIPS?
YOU KNOW HOW IT IS. COULD ALWAYS USE A COUPLE MORE.
WORK WITH WHAT YOU'VE GOT, THEN. YOU DON'T STOP PULLING THAT TRIGGER UNTIL IT CLICKS, SON.
NO MATTER HOW BAD THINGS ARE FALLING APART AROUND YOU, AS LONG AS YOU HAVE AT LEAST ONE BULLET LEFT, YOU CAN STILL GET THE JOB DONE. UNDERSTAND?
N7
YOU FINISH UP WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO THERE, AND THEN YOU COME ON HOME TO PALAVEN. WE HAVE A LOT TO SORT OUT.
YEAH, WE DO. THANKS, DAD. FOR EVERYTHING.
I HAVE TO GO NOW. DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME...I'LL MAKE IT HOME WHEN I CAN. THE ODDS JUST GOT A LOT BETTER.
THE END

Illustration by Anthony Palumbo

HOMEWORLDS
LIARA T'SONI

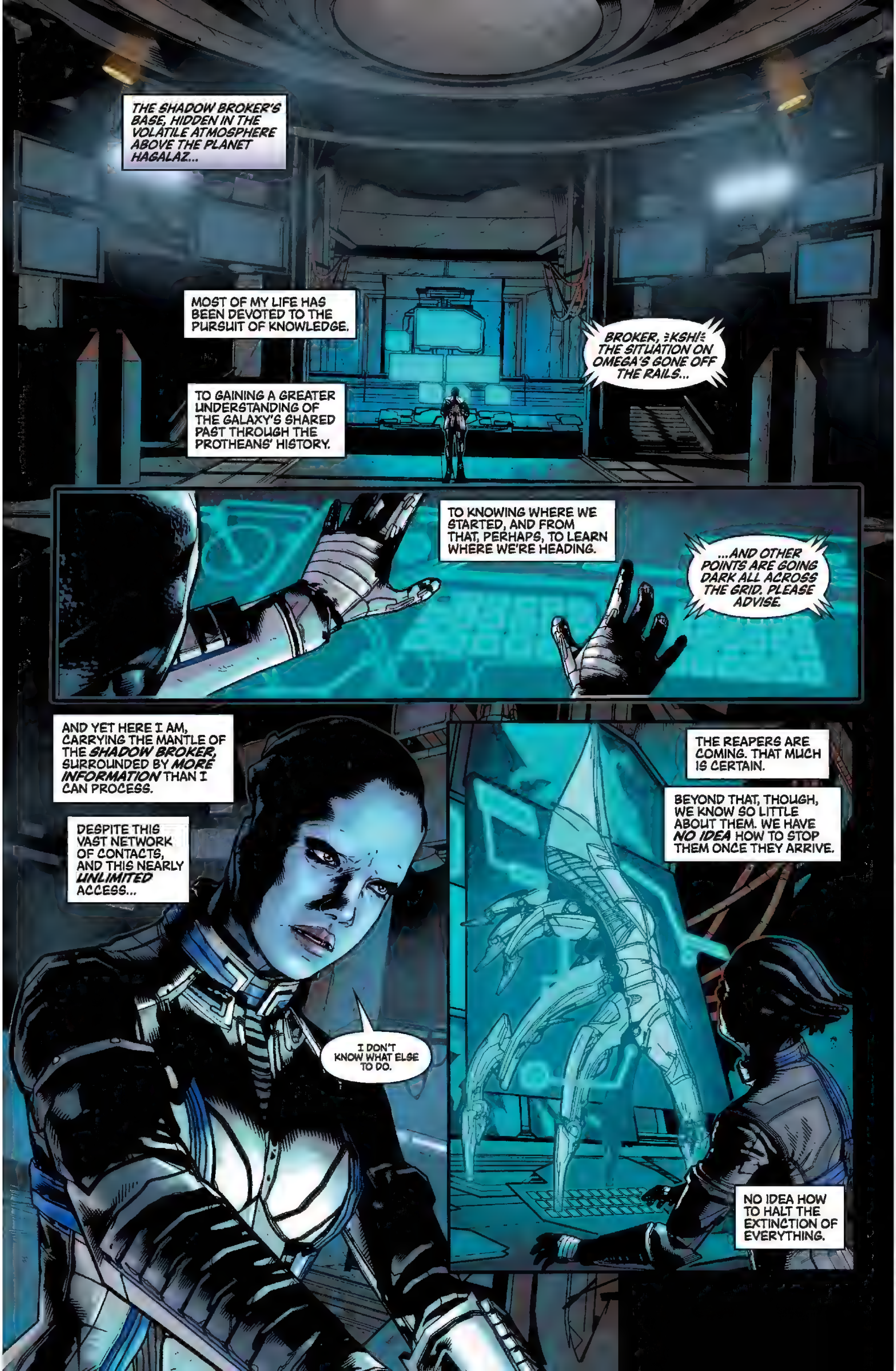
STORY
Mac Walters and Sylvia Feketekuty

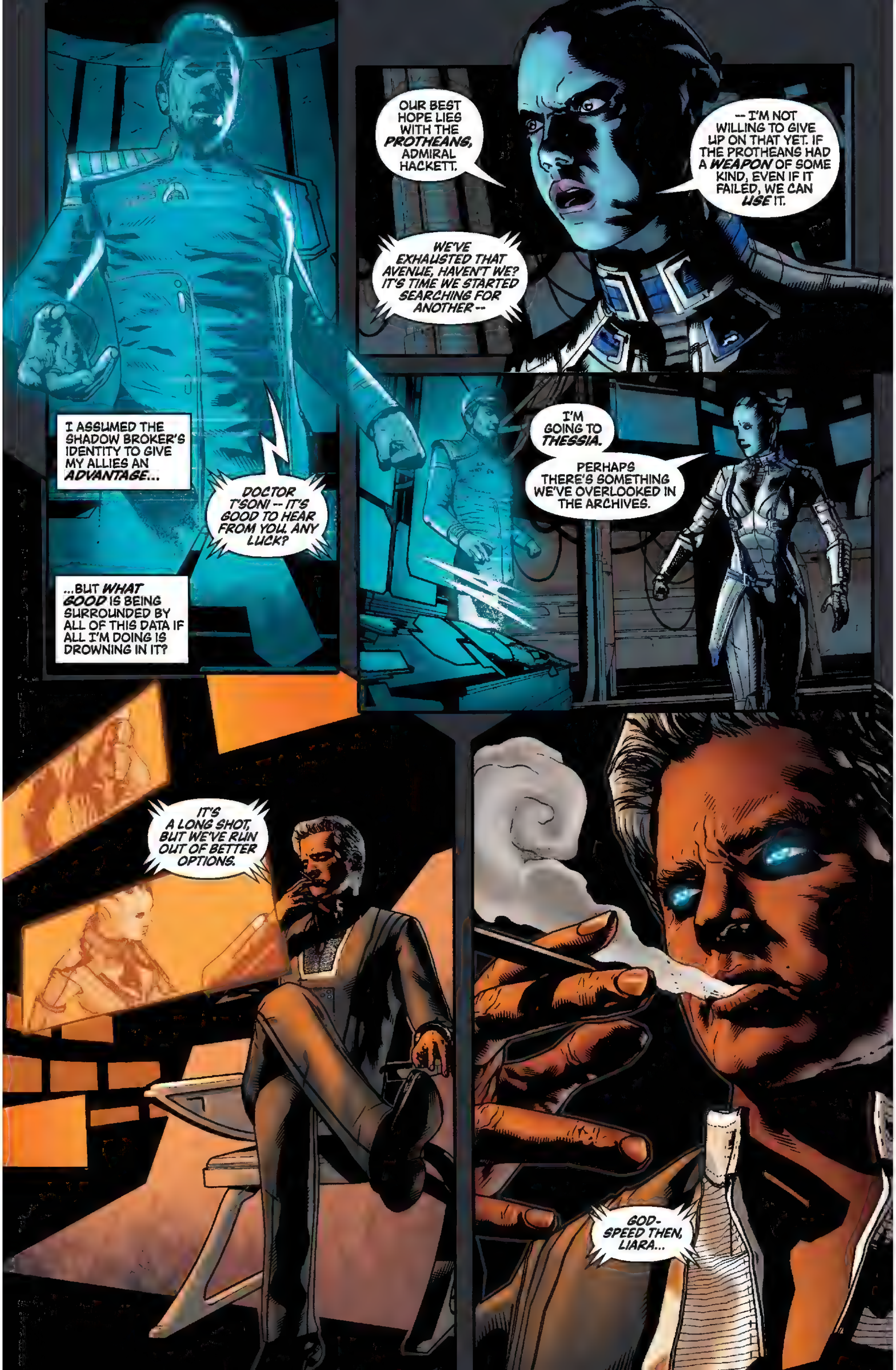
SCRIPT
Jeremy Barlow

ART
Omar Francia

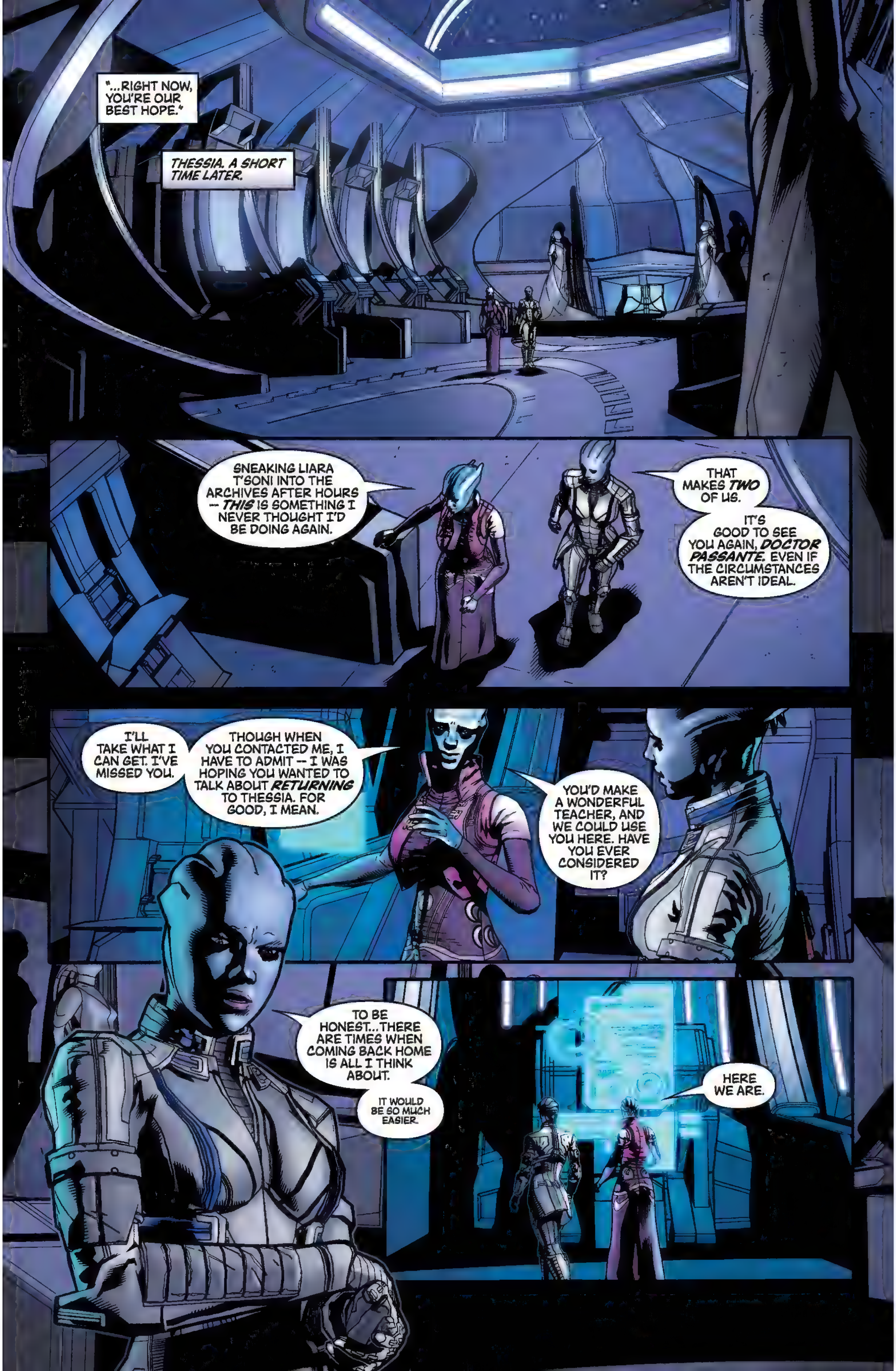
COLORS
Michael Atiyeh

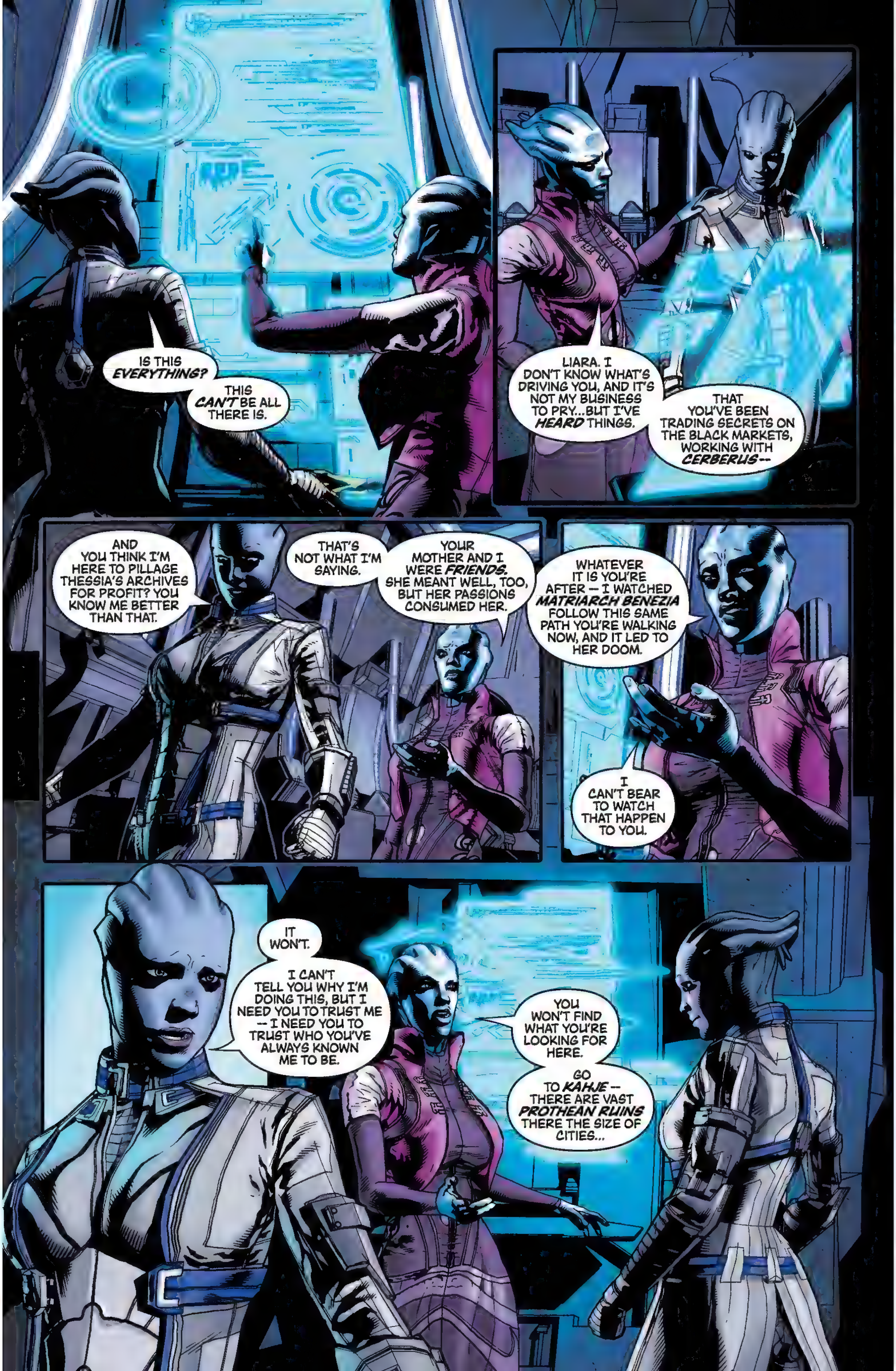
LETTERING
Michael Heisler

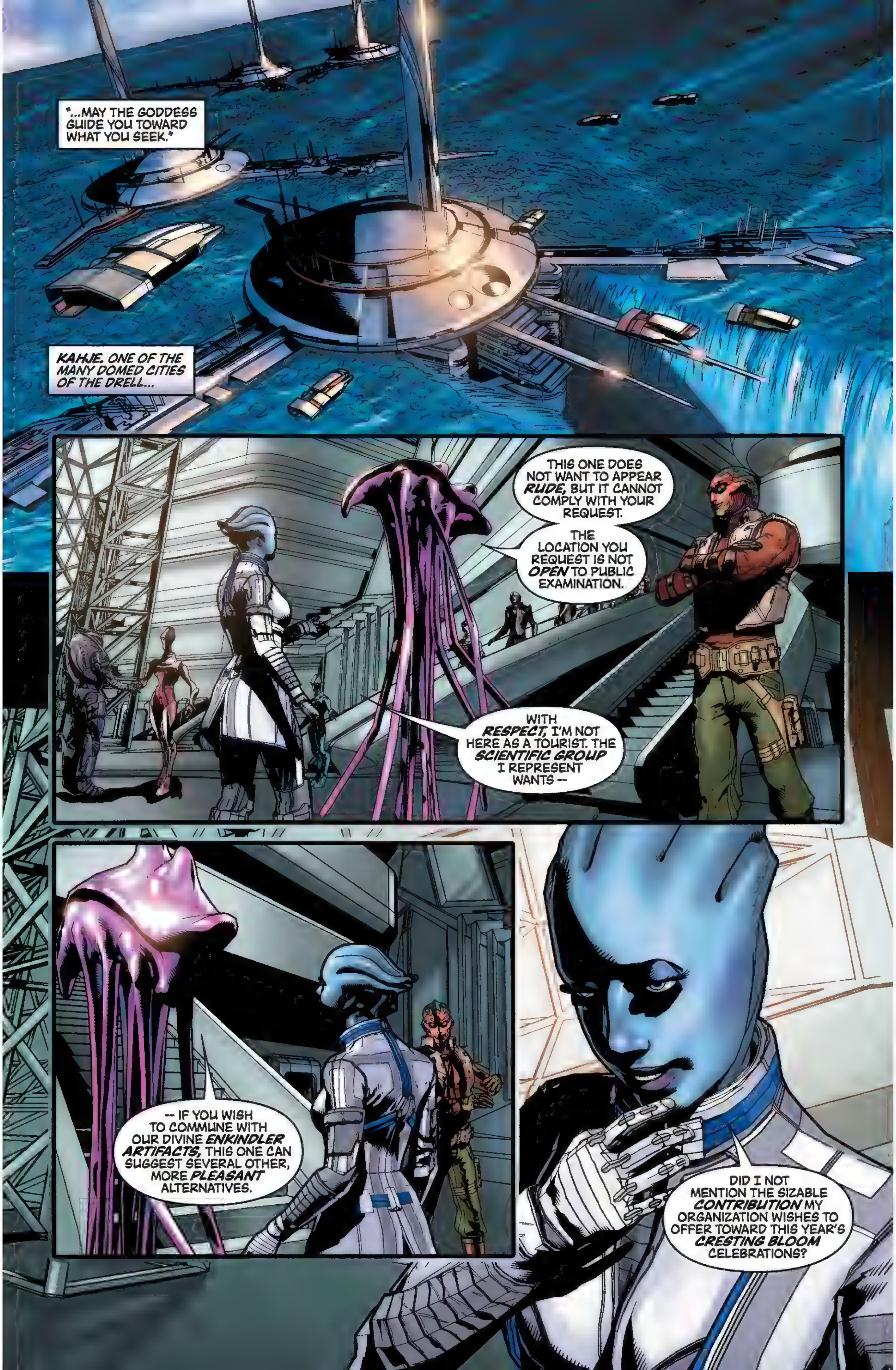

THE SHADOW BROKER'S BASE, HIDDEN IN THE VOLATILE ATMOSPHERE ABOVE THE PLANET HAGALAZ...
MOST OF MY LIFE HAS BEEN DEVOTED TO THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE.
TO GAINING A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE GALAXY'S SHARED PAST THROUGH THE PROTHEANS' HISTORY.
BROKER, KSH! THE SITUATION ON OMEGA'S GONE OFF THE RAILS...
TO KNOWING WHERE WE STARTED, AND FROM THAT, PERHAPS, TO LEARN WHERE WE'RE HEADING.
...AND OTHER POINTS ARE GOING DARK ALL ACROSS THE GRID. PLEASE ADVISE.
AND YET HERE I AM, CARRYING THE MANTLE OF THE *SHADOW BROKER,* SURROUNDED BY *MORE INFORMATION* THAN I CAN PROCESS.
DESPITE THIS VAST NETWORK OF CONTACTS, AND THIS NEARLY *UNLIMITED* ACCESS...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE TO DO.
THE REAPERS ARE COMING. THAT MUCH IS CERTAIN.
BEYOND THAT, THOUGH, WE KNOW SO LITTLE ABOUT THEM. WE HAVE *NO IDEA* HOW TO STOP THEM ONCE THEY ARRIVE.
NO IDEA HOW TO HALT THE EXTINCTION OF EVERYTHING.

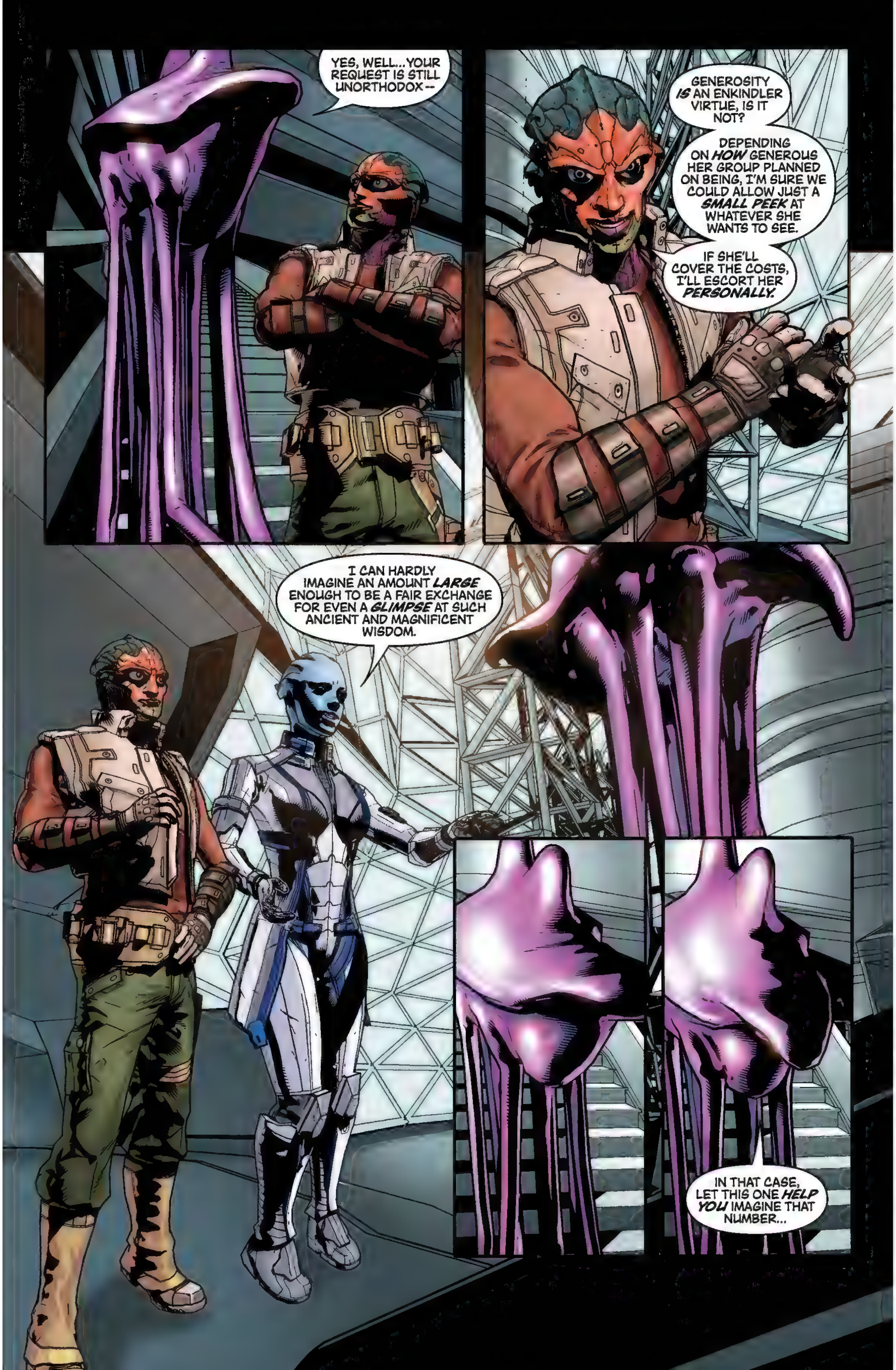


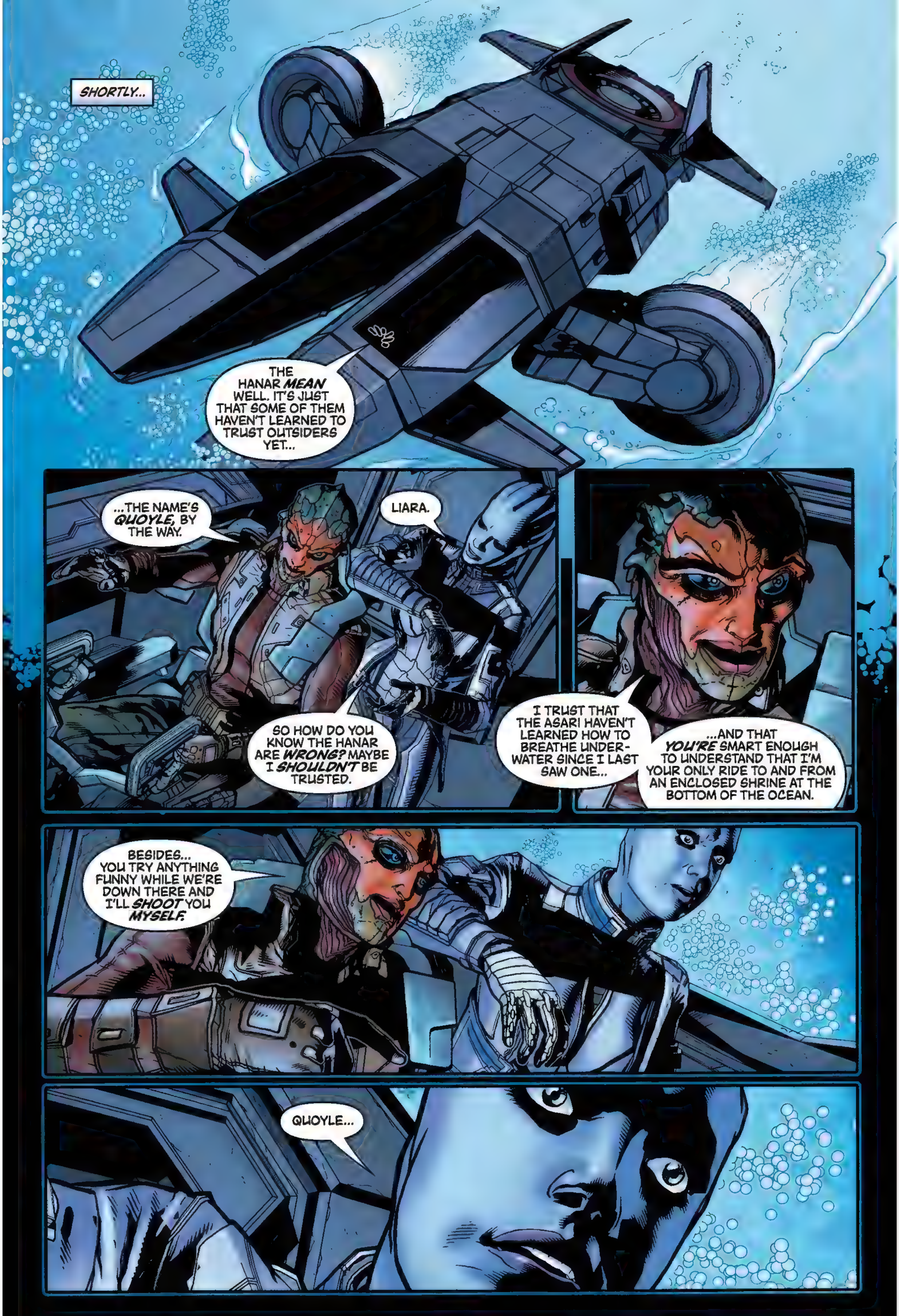
OUR BEST HOPE LIES WITH THE *PROTHEANS,* ADMIRAL HACKETT.
-- I'M NOT WILLING TO GIVE UP ON THAT YET. IF THE PROTHEANS HAD A *WEAPON* OF SOME KIND, EVEN IF IT FAILED, WE CAN *USE* IT.
WE'VE EXHAUSTED THAT AVENUE, HAVEN'T WE? IT'S TIME WE STARTED SEARCHING FOR ANOTHER --
I ASSUMED THE SHADOW BROKER'S IDENTITY TO GIVE MY ALLIES AN *ADVANTAGE*...
DOCTOR T'SONI -- IT'S GOOD TO HEAR FROM YOU. ANY LUCK?
...BUT *WHAT GOOD* IS BEING SURROUNDED BY ALL OF THIS DATA IF ALL I'M DOING IS DROWNING IN IT?
I'M GOING TO *THESSIA.*
PERHAPS THERE'S SOMETHING WE'VE OVERLOOKED IN THE ARCHIVES.
IT'S A LONG SHOT, BUT WE'VE RUN OUT OF BETTER OPTIONS.
GOD-SPEED THEN, LIARA...

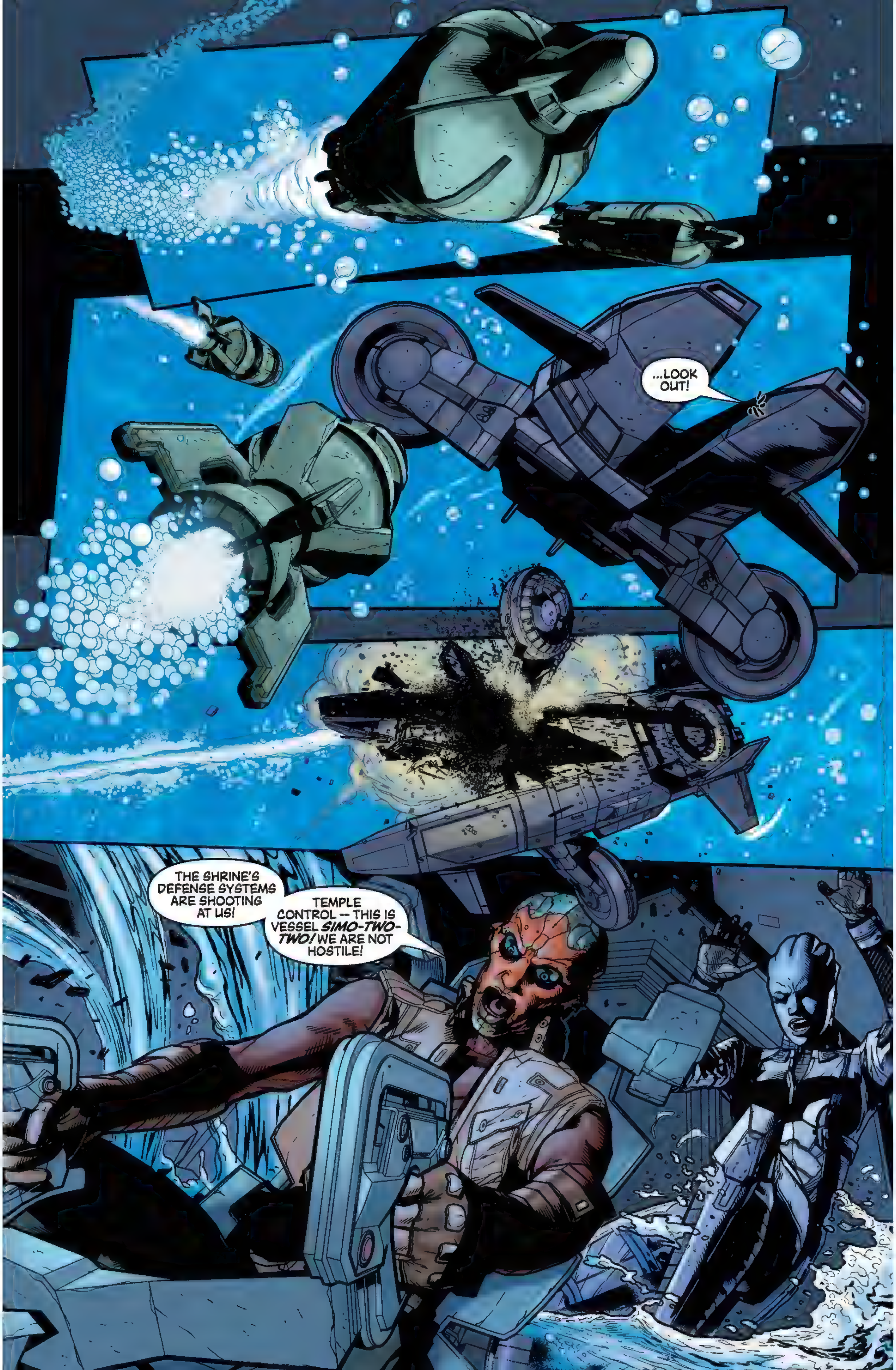

"...RIGHT NOW, YOU'RE OUR BEST HOPE."
THESSIA. A SHORT TIME LATER.
SNEAKING LIARA T'SONI INTO THE ARCHIVES AFTER HOURS -- THIS IS SOMETHING I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE DOING AGAIN.
THAT MAKES TWO OF US.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, DOCTOR PASSANTE. EVEN IF THE CIRCUMSTANCES AREN'T IDEAL.
I'LL TAKE WHAT I CAN GET. I'VE MISSED YOU.
THOUGH WHEN YOU CONTACTED ME, I HAVE TO ADMIT -- I WAS HOPING YOU WANTED TO TALK ABOUT RETURNING TO THESSIA. FOR GOOD, I MEAN.
YOU'D MAKE A WONDERFUL TEACHER, AND WE COULD USE YOU HERE. HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED IT?
TO BE HONEST...THERE ARE TIMES WHEN COMING BACK HOME IS ALL I THINK ABOUT.
IT WOULD BE SO MUCH EASIER.
HERE WE ARE.

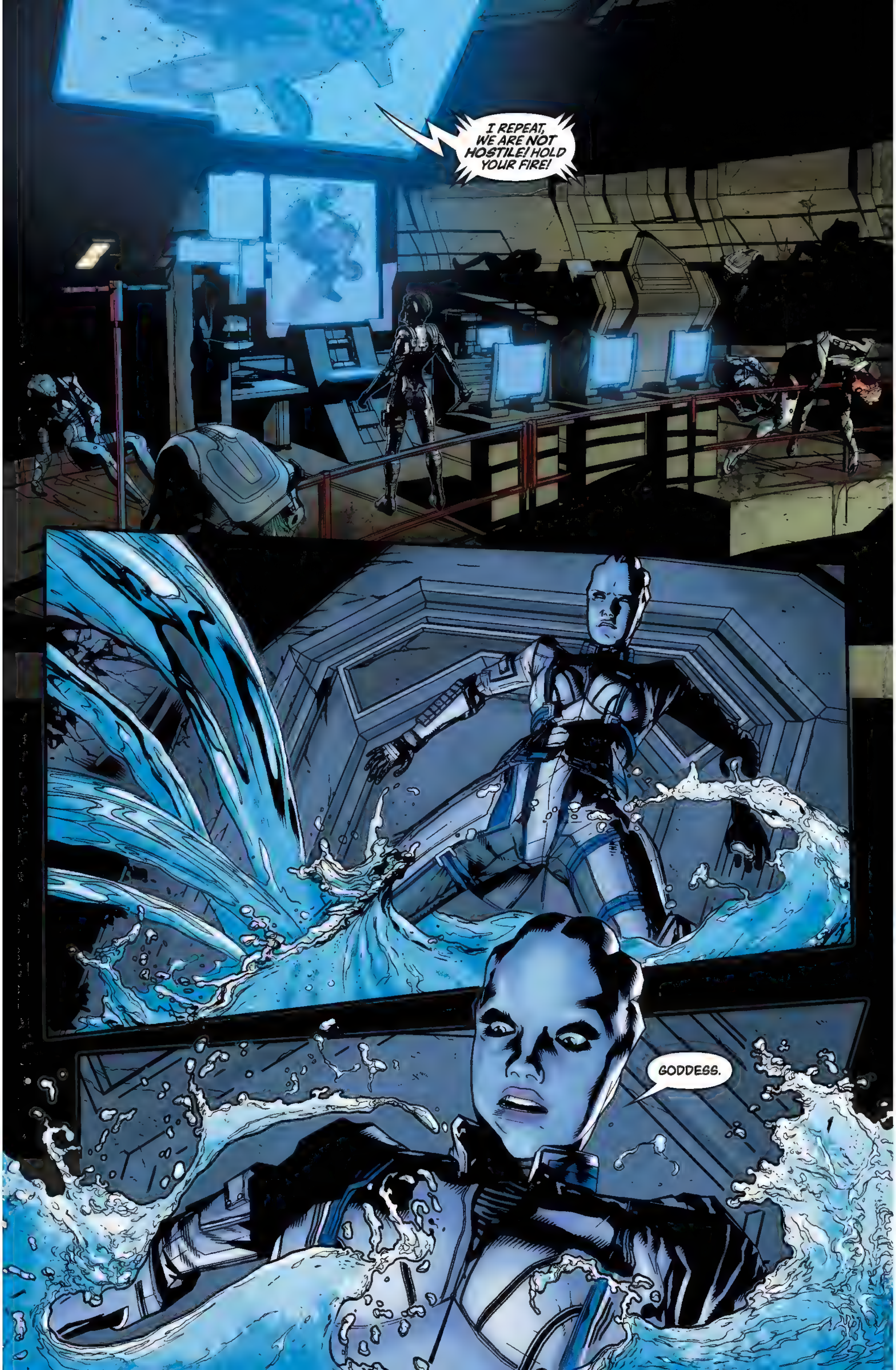

IS THIS *EVERYTHING?*
THIS *CAN'T* BE ALL THERE IS.
LIARA. I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S DRIVING YOU, AND IT'S NOT MY BUSINESS TO PRY...BUT I'VE *HEARD* THINGS.
THAT YOU'VE BEEN TRADING SECRETS ON THE BLACK MARKETS, WORKING WITH *CERBERUS*--
AND YOU THINK I'M HERE TO PILLAGE THESSIA'S ARCHIVES FOR PROFIT? YOU KNOW ME BETTER THAN THAT.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M SAYING.
YOUR MOTHER AND I WERE *FRIENDS.* SHE MEANT WELL, TOO, BUT HER PASSIONS CONSUMED HER.
WHATEVER IT IS YOU'RE AFTER -- I WATCHED *MATRIARCH BENEZIA* FOLLOW THIS SAME PATH YOU'RE WALKING NOW, AND IT LED TO HER DOOM.
I CAN'T BEAR TO WATCH THAT HAPPEN TO YOU.
IT WON'T.
I CAN'T TELL YOU WHY I'M DOING THIS, BUT I NEED YOU TO TRUST ME -- I NEED YOU TO TRUST WHO YOU'VE ALWAYS KNOWN ME TO BE.
YOU WON'T FIND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR HERE.
GO TO *KAHJE* -- THERE ARE VAST *PROTHEAN RUINS* THERE THE SIZE OF CITIES...

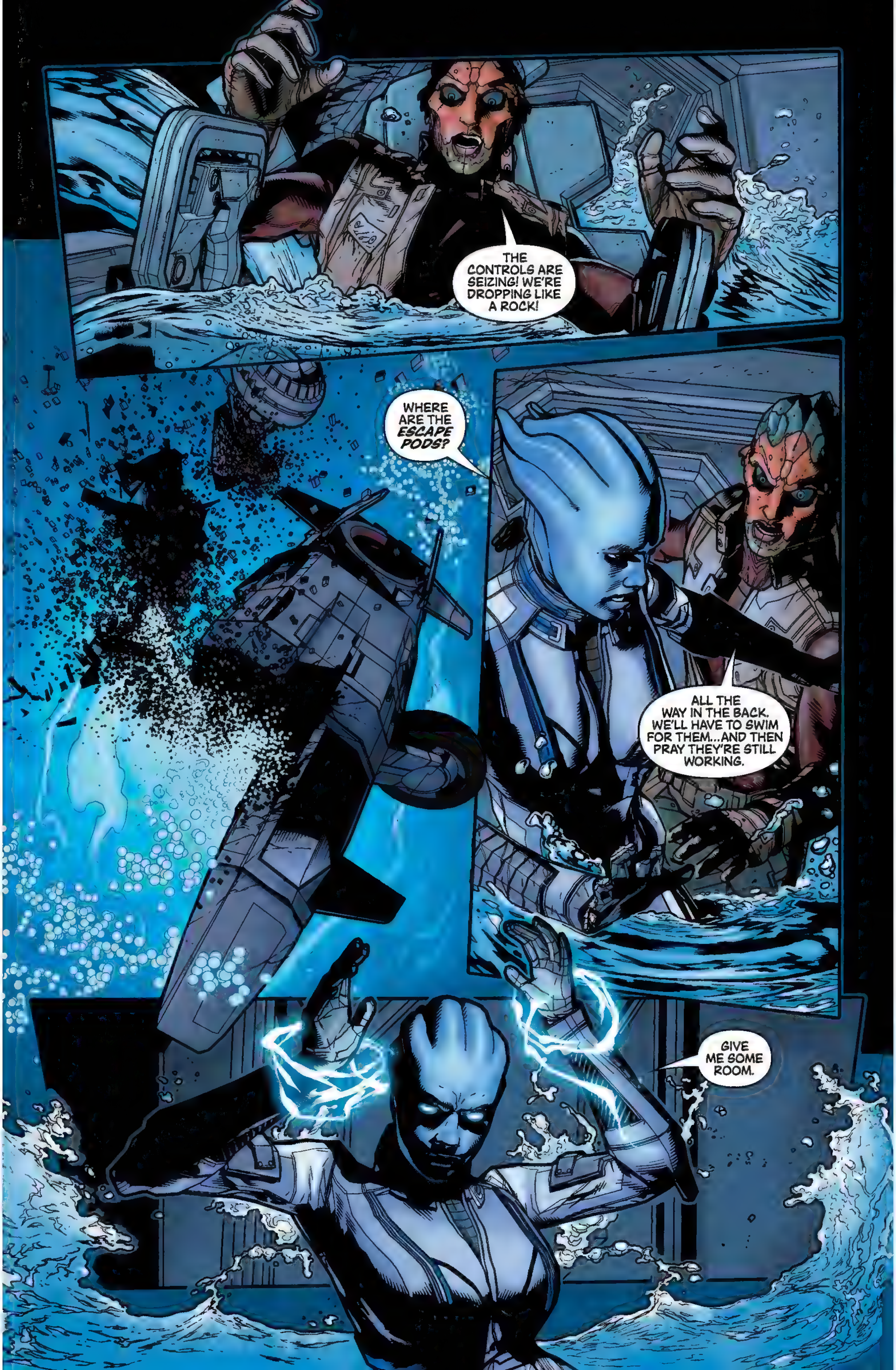

"...MAY THE GODDESS GUIDE YOU TOWARD WHAT YOU SEEK."
KAHJE. ONE OF THE MANY DOMED CITIES OF THE DRELL...
THIS ONE DOES NOT WANT TO APPEAR ***RUDE,*** BUT IT CANNOT COMPLY WITH YOUR REQUEST.
THE LOCATION YOU REQUEST IS NOT ***OPEN*** TO PUBLIC EXAMINATION.
WITH ***RESPECT,*** I'M NOT HERE AS A TOURIST. THE ***SCIENTIFIC GROUP*** I REPRESENT WANTS --
-- IF YOU WISH TO COMMUNE WITH OUR DIVINE ***ENKINDLER ARTIFACTS,*** THIS ONE CAN SUGGEST SEVERAL OTHER, MORE ***PLEASANT*** ALTERNATIVES.
DID I NOT MENTION THE SIZABLE ***CONTRIBUTION*** MY ORGANIZATION WISHES TO OFFER TOWARD THIS YEAR'S ***CRESTING BLOOM*** CELEBRATIONS?

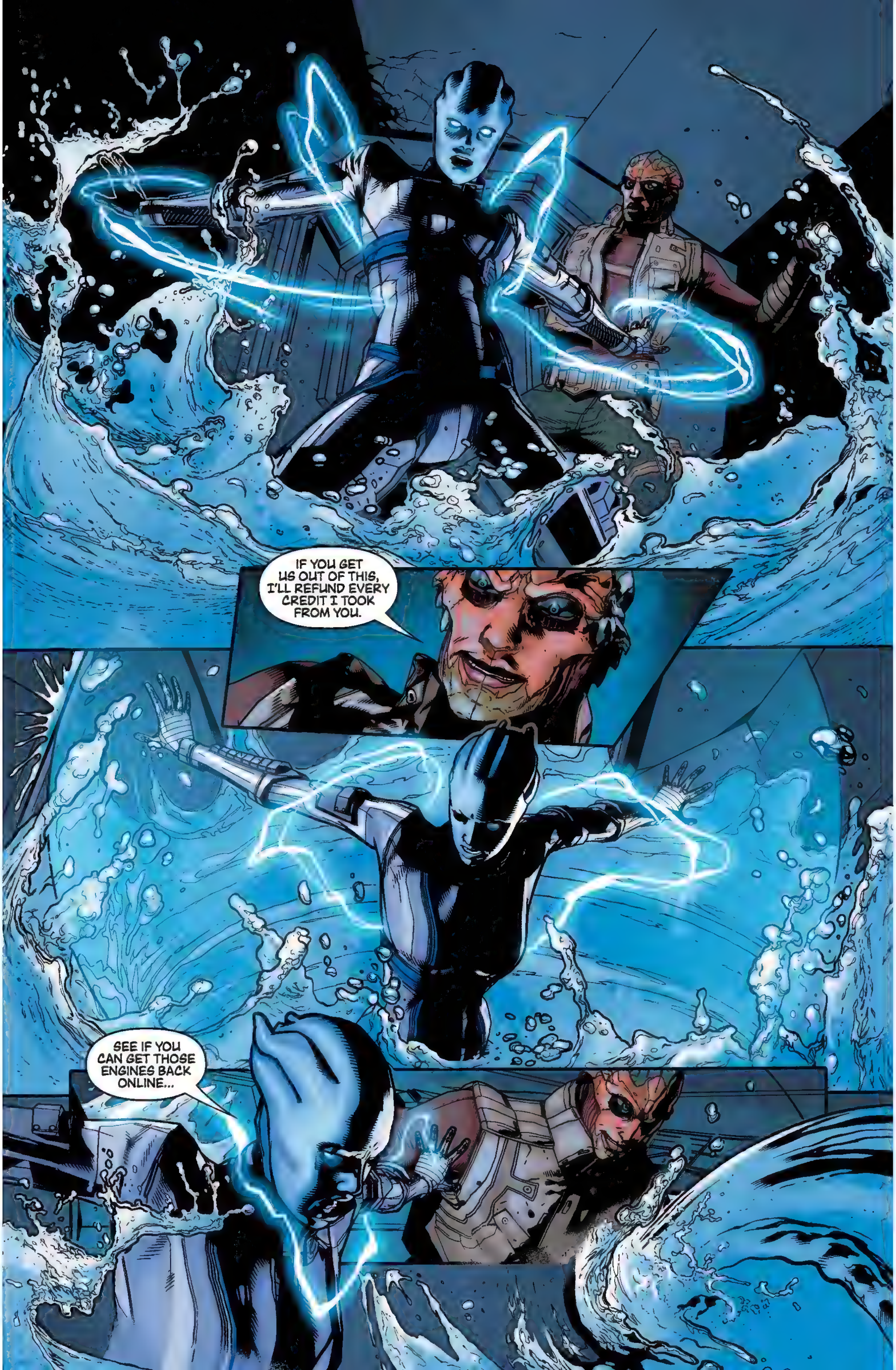

YES, WELL... YOUR REQUEST IS STILL UNORTHODOX --
GENEROSITY *IS* AN ENKINDLER VIRTUE, IS IT NOT?
DEPENDING ON *HOW* GENEROUS HER GROUP PLANNED ON BEING, I'M SURE WE COULD ALLOW JUST A *SMALL PEEK* AT WHATEVER SHE WANTS TO SEE.
IF SHE'LL COVER THE COSTS, I'LL ESCORT HER *PERSONALLY.*
I CAN HARDLY IMAGINE AN AMOUNT *LARGE* ENOUGH TO BE A FAIR EXCHANGE FOR EVEN A *GLIMPSE* AT SUCH ANCIENT AND MAGNIFICENT WISDOM.
IN THAT CASE, LET THIS ONE *HELP YOU* IMAGINE THAT NUMBER...

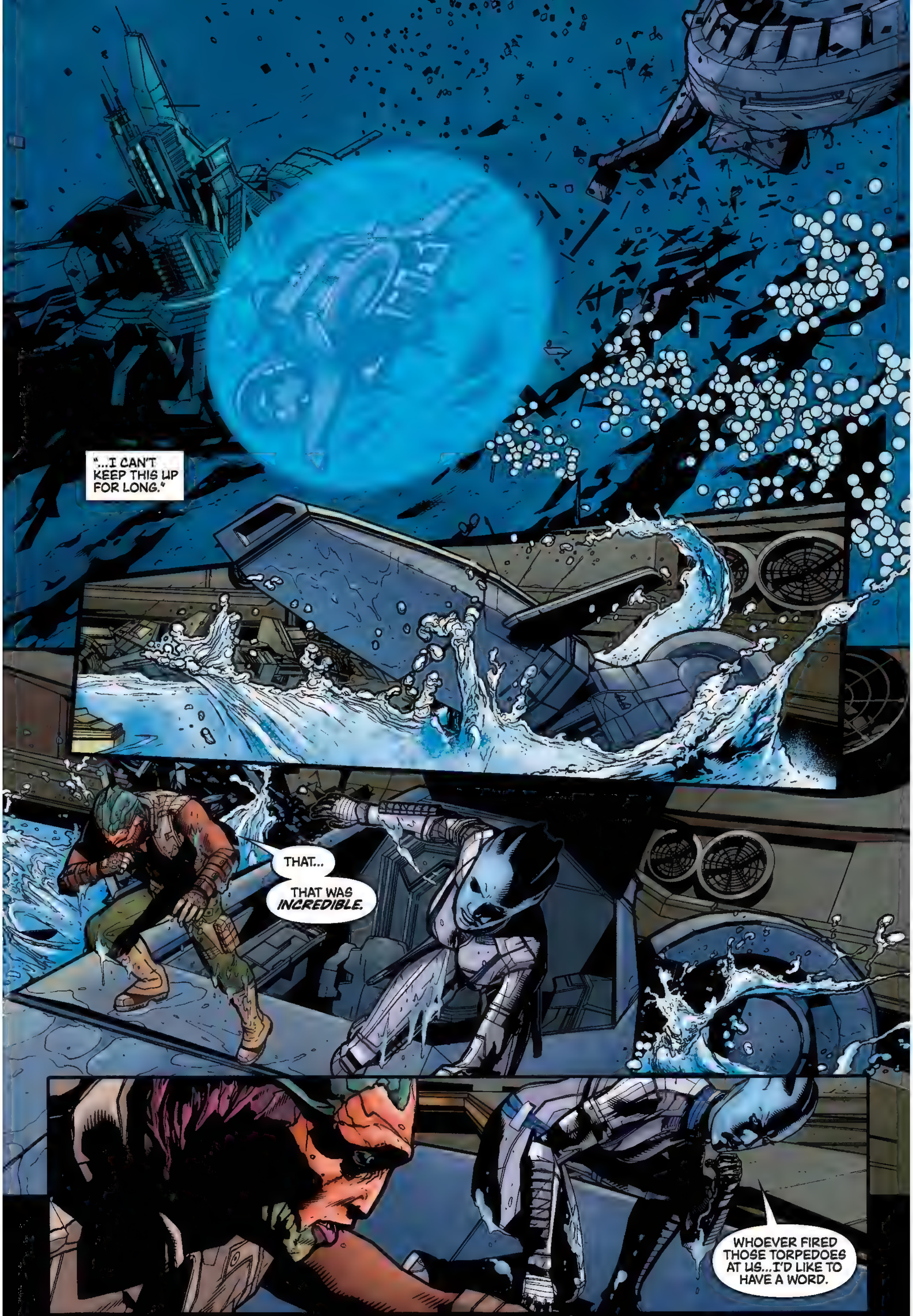

SHORTLY...
THE HANAR *MEAN* WELL. IT'S JUST THAT SOME OF THEM HAVEN'T LEARNED TO TRUST OUTSIDERS YET...
...THE NAME'S *QUOYLE,* BY THE WAY.
LIARA.
SO HOW DO YOU KNOW THE HANAR ARE *WRONG?* MAYBE I *SHOULDN'T* BE TRUSTED.
I TRUST THAT THE ASARI HAVEN'T LEARNED HOW TO BREATHE UNDERWATER SINCE I LAST SAW ONE...
...AND THAT *YOU'RE* SMART ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND THAT I'M YOUR ONLY RIDE TO AND FROM AN ENCLOSED SHRINE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN.
BESIDES... YOU TRY ANYTHING FUNNY WHILE WE'RE DOWN THERE AND I'LL *SHOOT* YOU *MYSELF.*
QUOYLE...

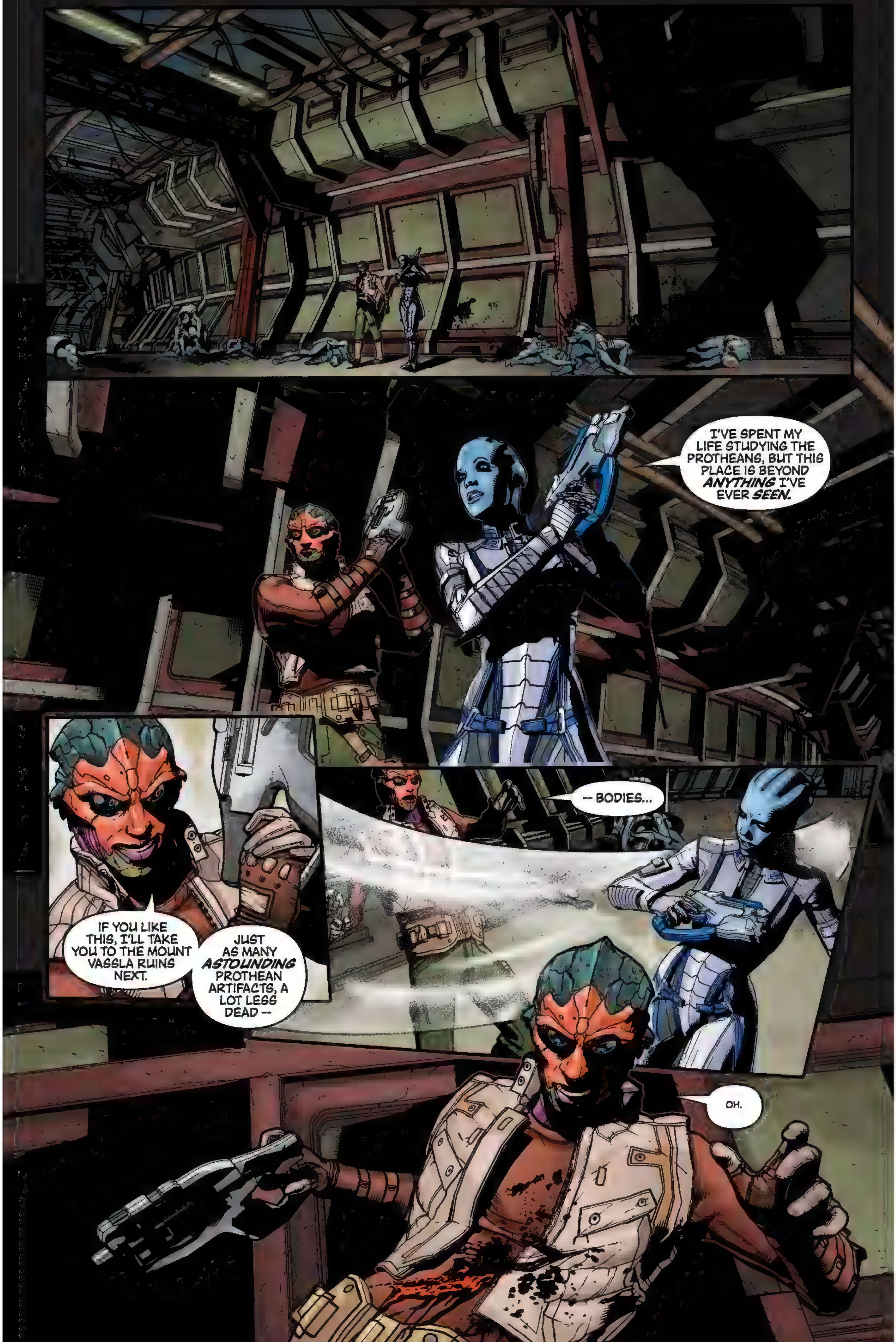

...LOOK OUT!
THE SHRINE'S DEFENSE SYSTEMS ARE SHOOTING AT US!
TEMPLE CONTROL -- THIS IS VESSEL *SIMO-TWO-TWO!* WE ARE NOT HOSTILE!

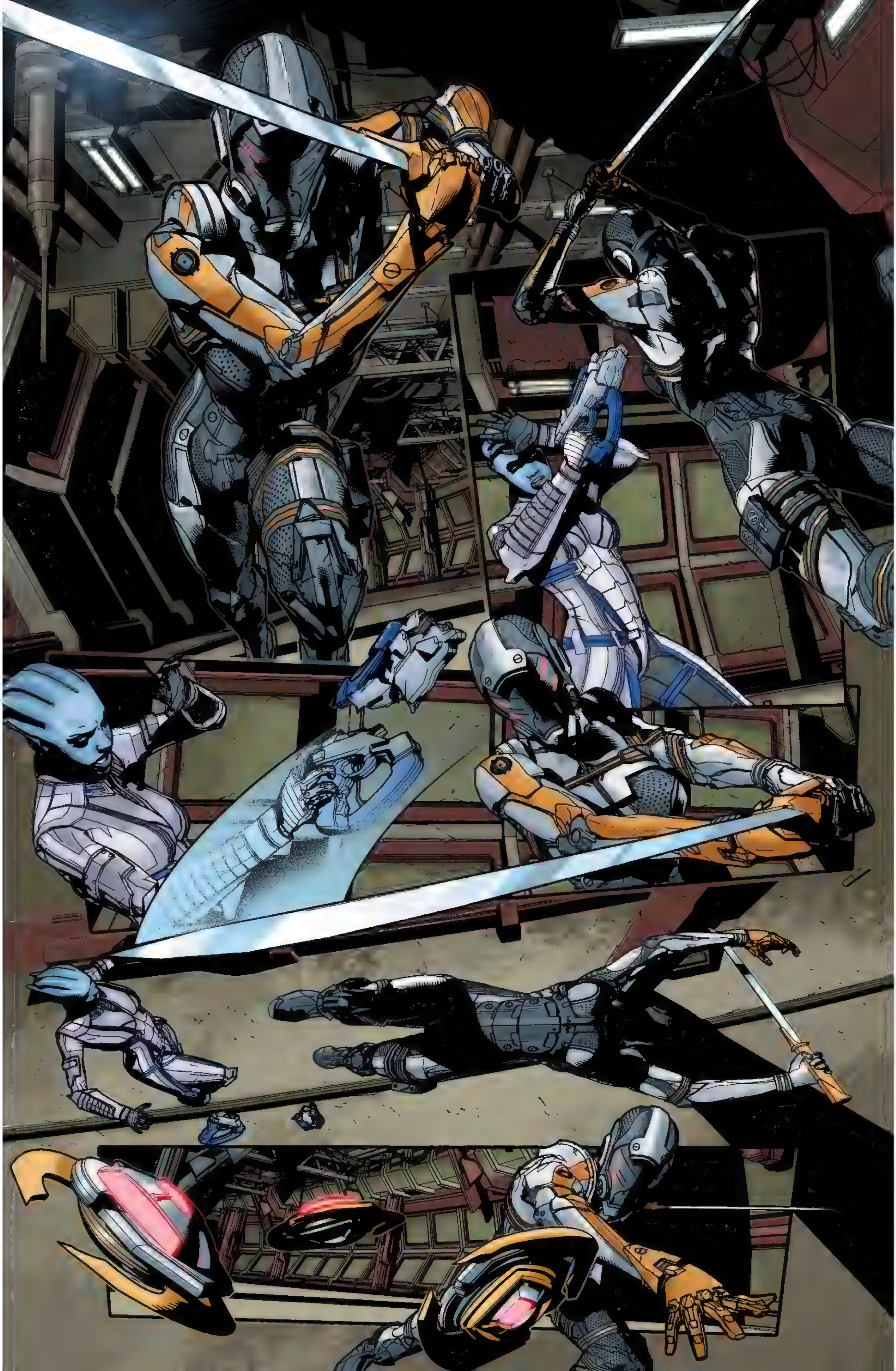

I REPEAT, WE ARE NOT HOSTILE! HOLD YOUR FIRE!
GODDESS.

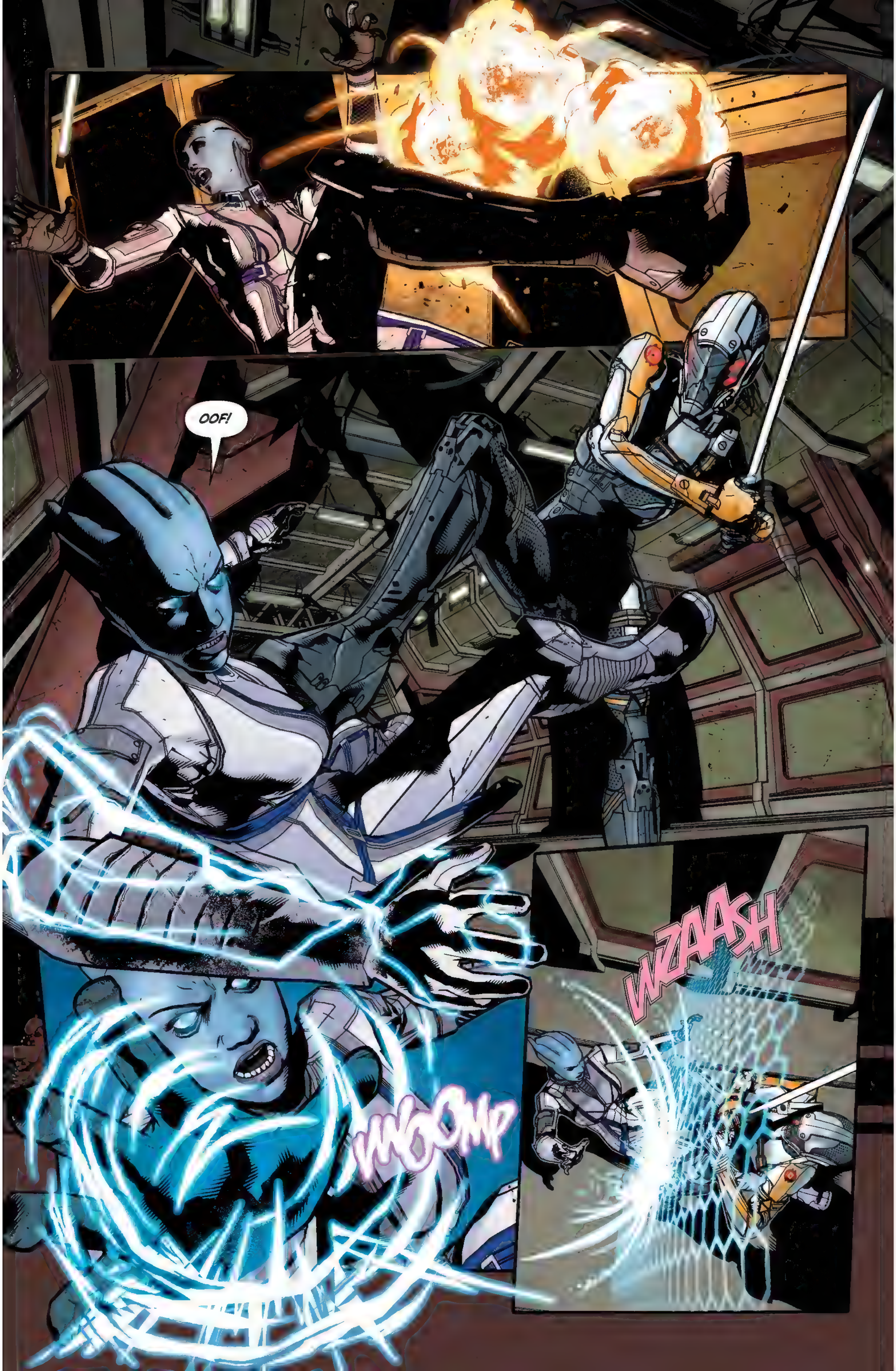

THE CONTROLS ARE SEIZING! WE'RE DROPPING LIKE A ROCK!
WHERE ARE THE *ESCAPE PODS?*
ALL THE WAY IN THE BACK. WE'LL HAVE TO SWIM FOR THEM...AND THEN PRAY THEY'RE STILL WORKING.
GIVE ME SOME ROOM.

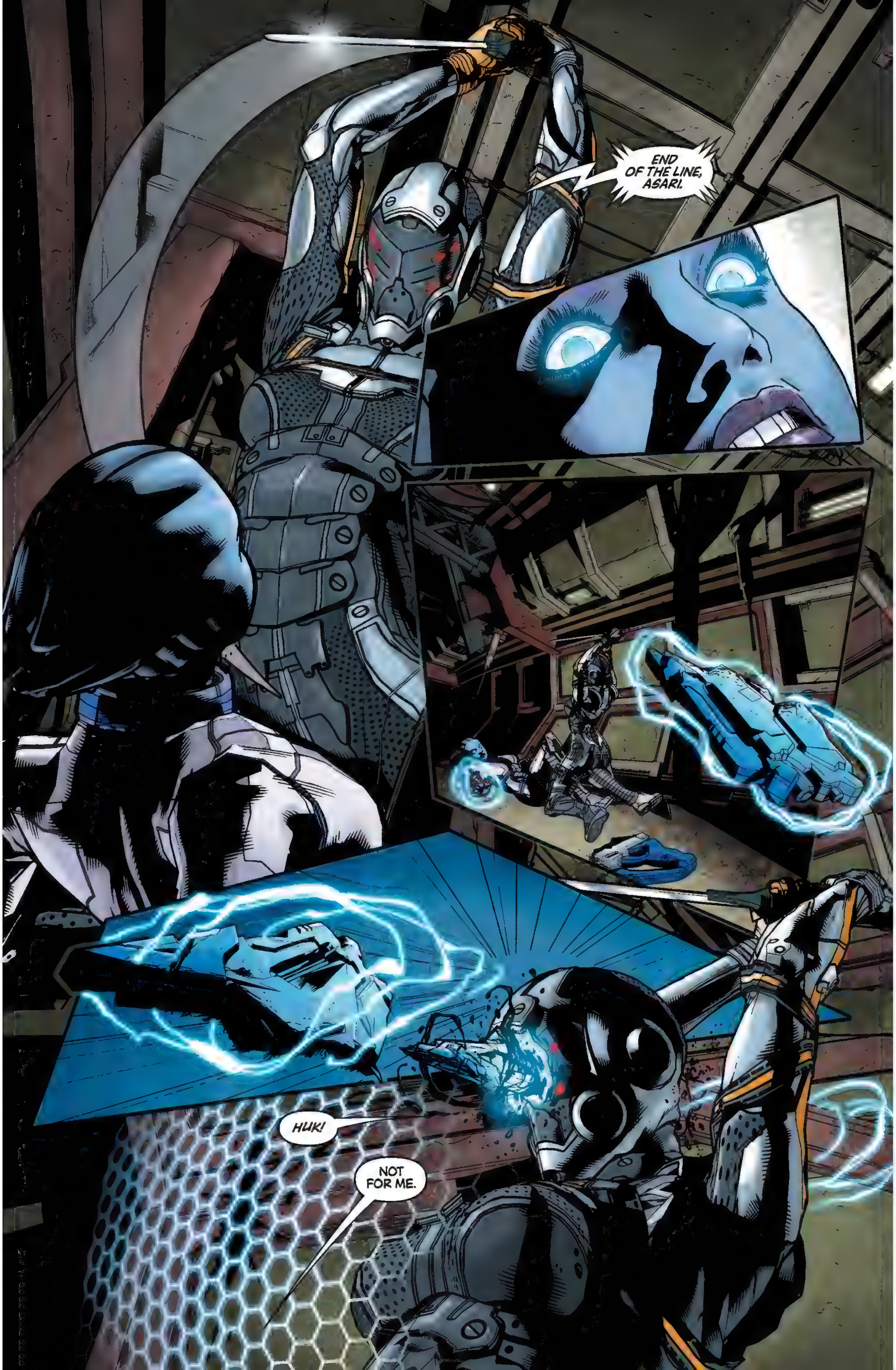

IF YOU GET US OUT OF THIS, I'LL REFUND EVERY CREDIT I TOOK FROM YOU.
SEE IF YOU CAN GET THOSE ENGINES BACK ONLINE...

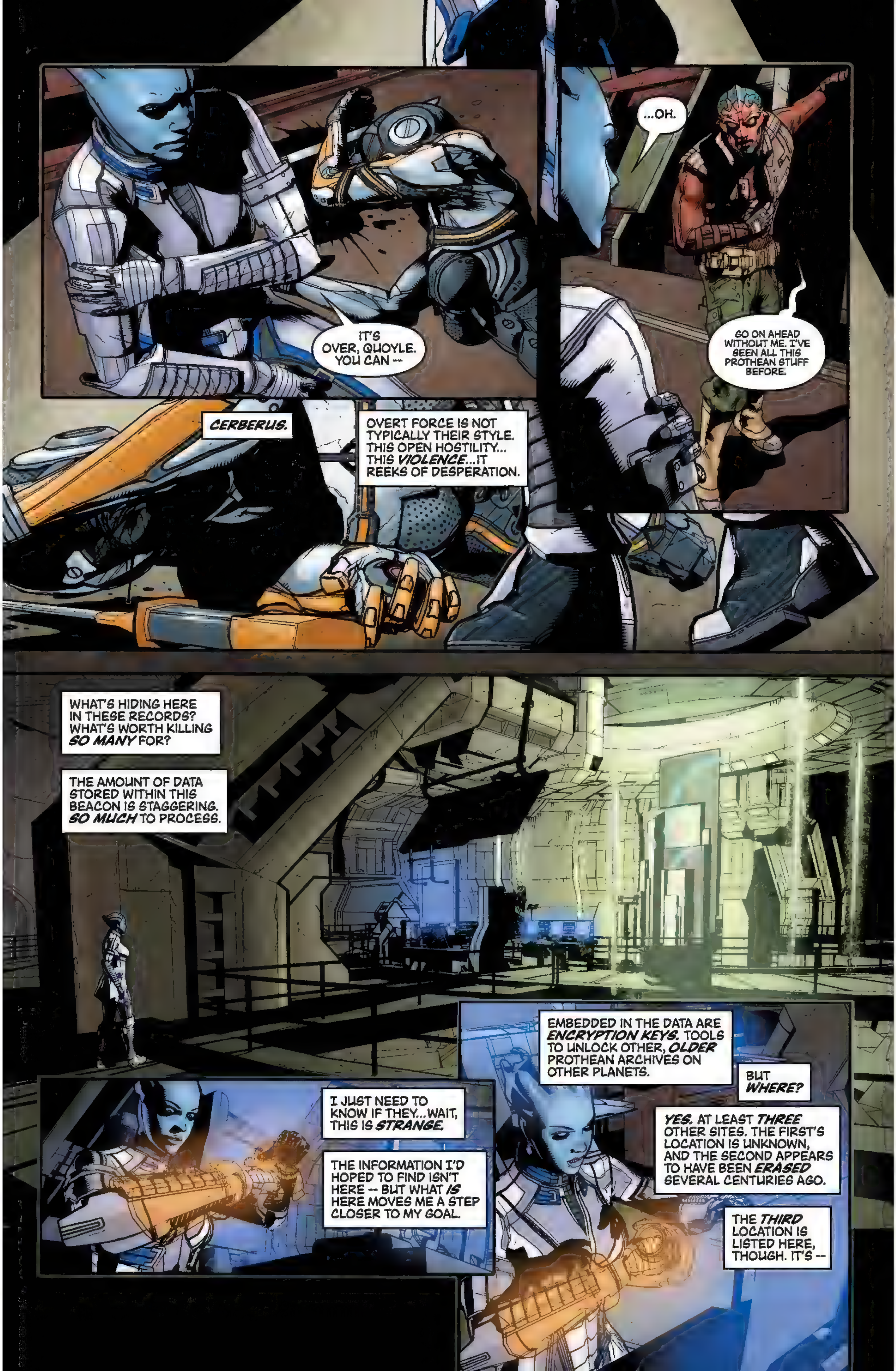

"...I CAN'T KEEP THIS UP FOR LONG."
THAT...
THAT WAS *INCREDIBLE.*
WHOEVER FIRED THOSE TORPEDOES AT US...I'D LIKE TO HAVE A WORD.

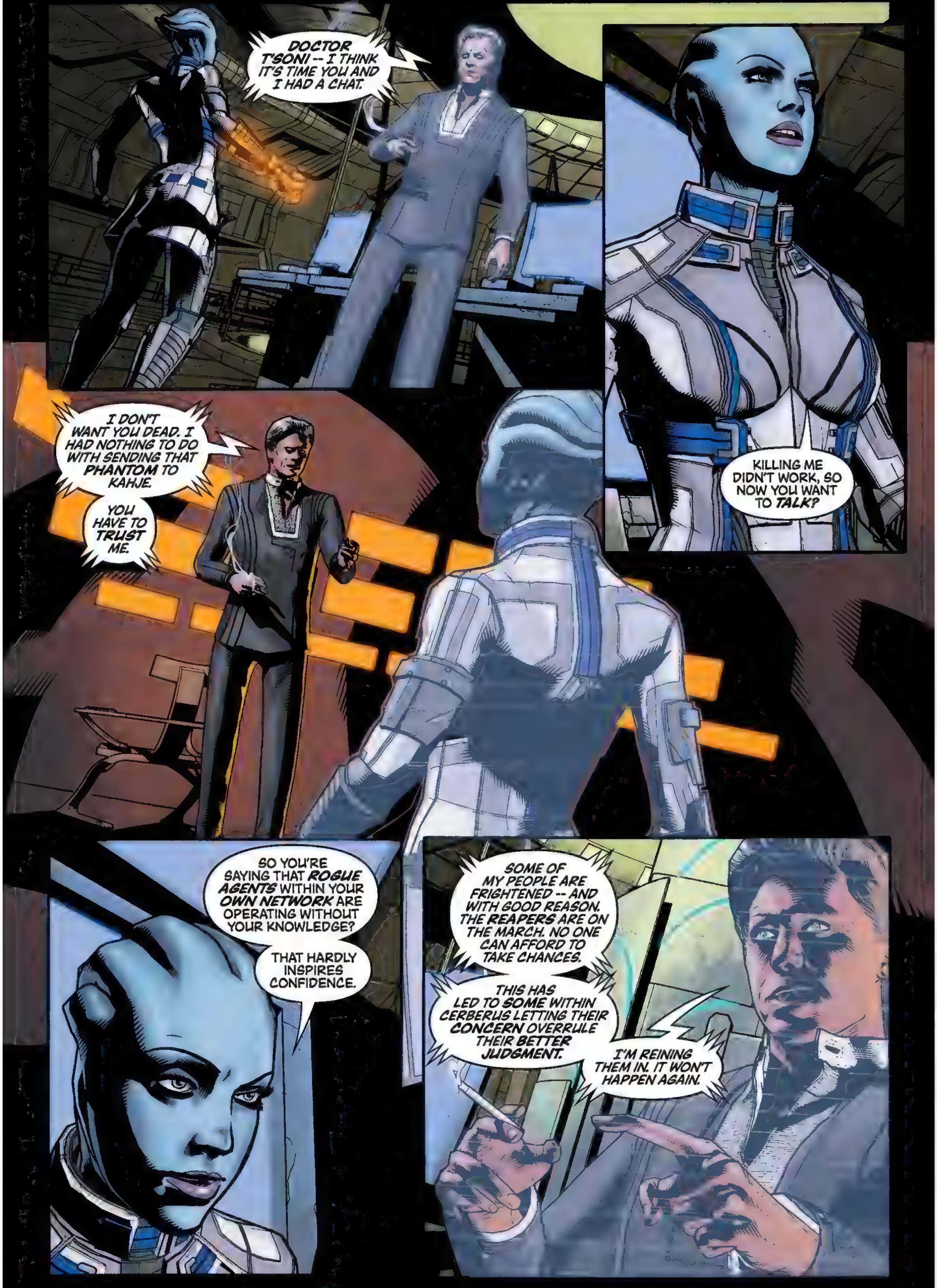

I'VE SPENT MY LIFE STUDYING THE PROTHEANS, BUT THIS PLACE IS BEYOND *ANYTHING* I'VE EVER *SEEN.*
IF YOU LIKE THIS, I'LL TAKE YOU TO THE MOUNT VASSLA RUINS NEXT.
JUST AS MANY *ASTOUNDING* PROTHEAN ARTIFACTS, A LOT LESS DEAD --
-- BODIES...
OH.

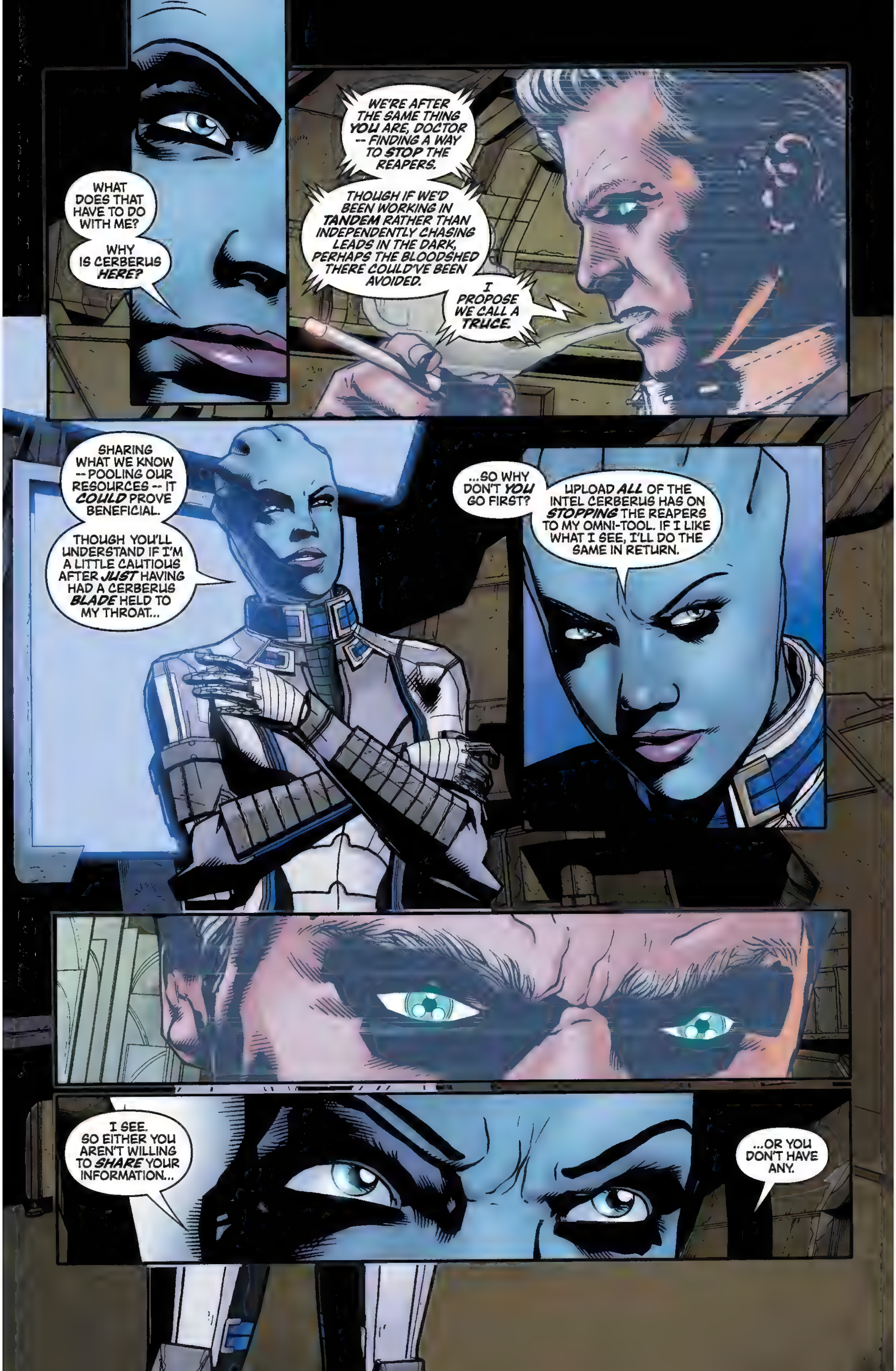


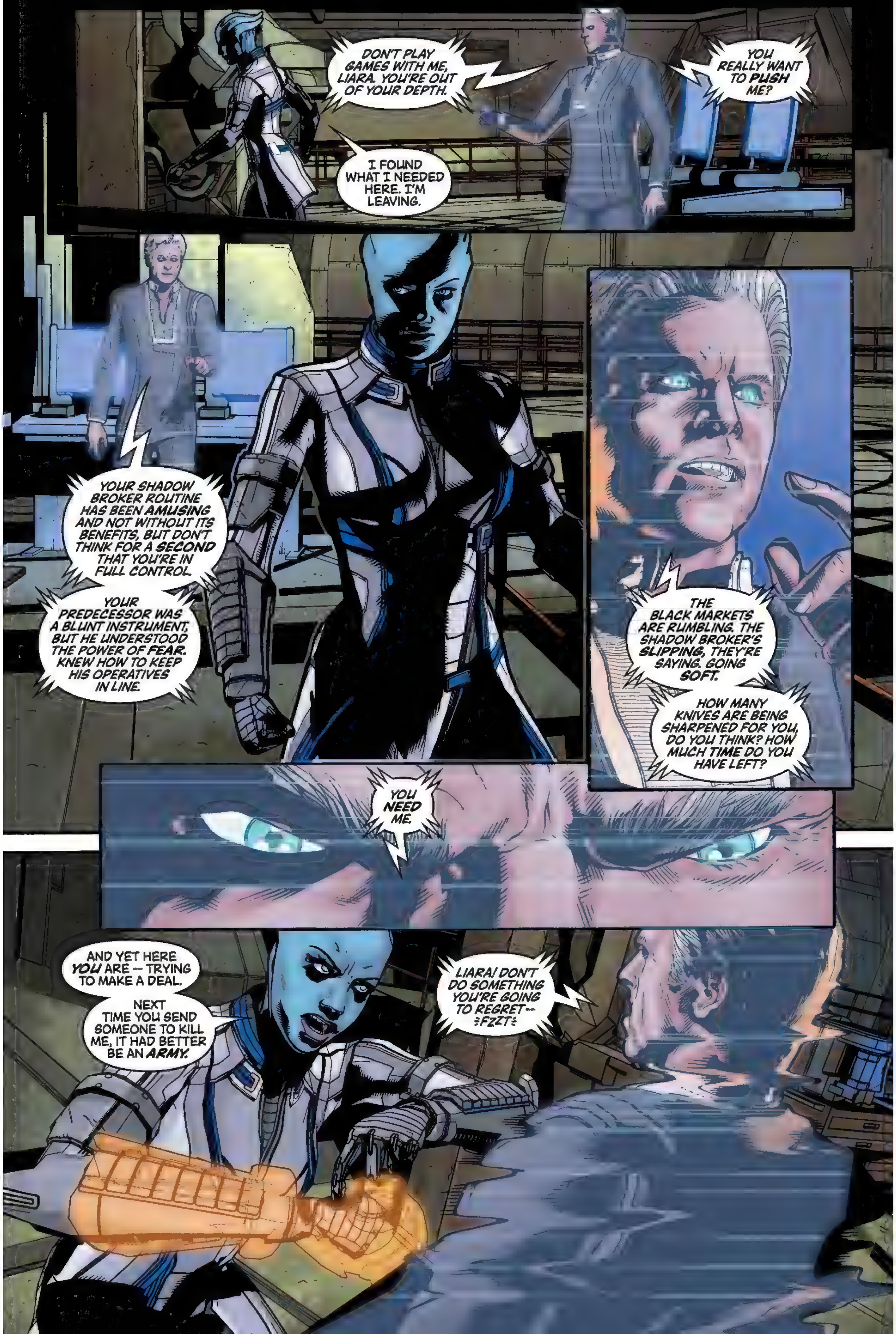

OOF!
WZAASH
WOOMP

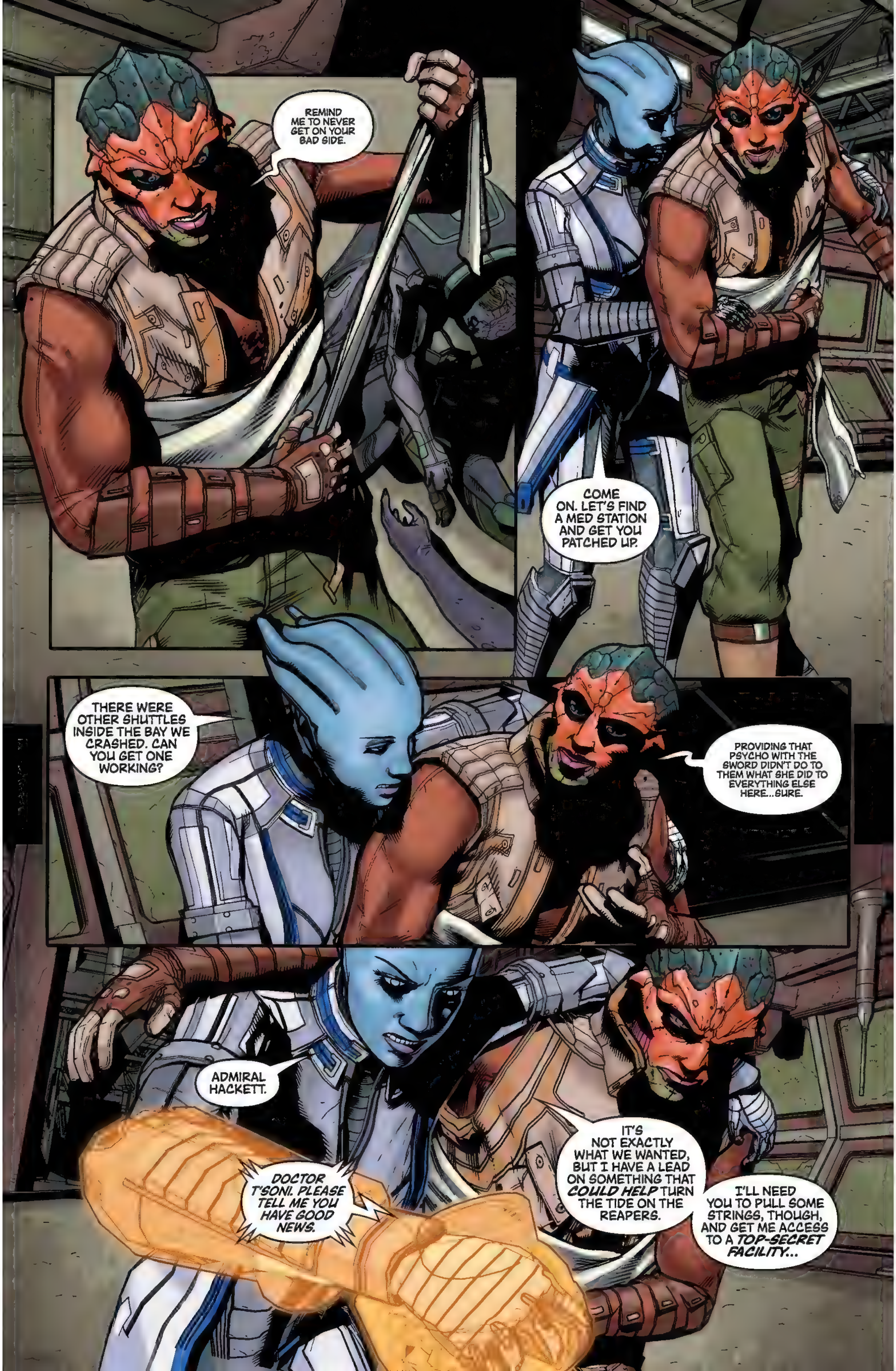

END OF THE LINE, ASARI.
HUK!
NOT FOR ME.


IT'S OVER, QUOYLE. YOU CAN --
...OH.
GO ON AHEAD WITHOUT ME. I'VE SEEN ALL THIS PROTHEAN STUFF BEFORE.
CERBERUS.
OVERT FORCE IS NOT TYPICALLY THEIR STYLE. THIS OPEN HOSTILITY... THIS *VIOLENCE*...IT REEKS OF DESPERATION.
WHAT'S HIDING HERE IN THESE RECORDS? WHAT'S WORTH KILLING *SO MANY* FOR?
THE AMOUNT OF DATA STORED WITHIN THIS BEACON IS STAGGERING. *SO MUCH* TO PROCESS.
I JUST NEED TO KNOW IF THEY...WAIT, THIS IS *STRANGE.*
THE INFORMATION I'D HOPED TO FIND ISN'T HERE -- BUT WHAT *IS* HERE MOVES ME A STEP CLOSER TO MY GOAL.
EMBEDDED IN THE DATA ARE *ENCRYPTION KEYS.* TOOLS TO UNLOCK OTHER, *OLDER* PROTHEAN ARCHIVES ON OTHER PLANETS.
BUT *WHERE?*
YES. AT LEAST *THREE* OTHER SITES. THE FIRST'S LOCATION IS UNKNOWN, AND THE SECOND APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN *ERASED* SEVERAL CENTURIES AGO.
THE *THIRD* LOCATION IS LISTED HERE, THOUGH. IT'S --


DOCTOR T'SONI -- I THINK IT'S TIME YOU AND I HAD A CHAT.
KILLING ME DIDN'T WORK, SO NOW YOU WANT TO *TALK?*
I DON'T WANT YOU DEAD. I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH SENDING THAT *PHANTOM* TO KAHJE.
YOU HAVE TO *TRUST* ME.
SO YOU'RE SAYING THAT *ROGUE AGENTS* WITHIN YOUR *OWN NETWORK* ARE OPERATING WITHOUT YOUR KNOWLEDGE?
THAT HARDLY INSPIRES CONFIDENCE.
SOME OF MY PEOPLE ARE FRIGHTENED -- AND WITH GOOD REASON. THE *REAPERS* ARE ON THE MARCH. NO ONE CAN AFFORD TO TAKE CHANCES.
THIS HAS LED TO *SOME* WITHIN CERBERUS LETTING THEIR *CONCERN* OVERRULE THEIR *BETTER JUDGMENT.*
I'M REINING THEM IN. IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN.


WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH ME?
WHY IS CERBERUS *HERE?*
WE'RE AFTER THE SAME THING ***YOU*** ARE, DOCTOR -- FINDING A WAY TO ***STOP*** THE REAPERS.
THOUGH IF WE'D BEEN WORKING IN ***TANDEM*** RATHER THAN INDEPENDENTLY CHASING LEADS IN THE DARK, PERHAPS THE BLOODSHED THERE COULD'VE BEEN AVOIDED.
I PROPOSE WE CALL A ***TRUCE.***
SHARING WHAT WE KNOW -- POOLING OUR RESOURCES -- IT ***COULD*** PROVE BENEFICIAL.
THOUGH YOU'LL UNDERSTAND IF I'M A LITTLE CAUTIOUS AFTER ***JUST*** HAVING HAD A CERBERUS ***BLADE*** HELD TO MY THROAT...
...SO WHY DON'T ***YOU*** GO FIRST?
UPLOAD ***ALL*** OF THE INTEL CERBERUS HAS ON ***STOPPING*** THE REAPERS TO MY OMNI-TOOL. IF I LIKE WHAT I SEE, I'LL DO THE SAME IN RETURN.
I SEE. SO EITHER YOU AREN'T WILLING TO ***SHARE*** YOUR INFORMATION...
...OR YOU DON'T HAVE ANY.


DON'T PLAY GAMES WITH ME, LIARA. YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR DEPTH.
YOU REALLY WANT TO PUSH ME?
I FOUND WHAT I NEEDED HERE. I'M LEAVING.
YOUR SHADOW BROKER ROUTINE HAS BEEN AMUSING AND NOT WITHOUT ITS BENEFITS, BUT DON'T THINK FOR A SECOND THAT YOU'RE IN FULL CONTROL.
YOUR PREDECESSOR WAS A BLUNT INSTRUMENT, BUT HE UNDERSTOOD THE POWER OF FEAR. KNEW HOW TO KEEP HIS OPERATIVES IN LINE.
THE BLACK MARKETS ARE RUMBLING. THE SHADOW BROKER'S SLIPPING, THEY'RE SAYING. GOING SOFT.
HOW MANY KNIVES ARE BEING SHARPENED FOR YOU, DO YOU THINK? HOW MUCH TIME DO YOU HAVE LEFT?
YOU NEED ME.
AND YET HERE YOU ARE -- TRYING TO MAKE A DEAL.
NEXT TIME YOU SEND SOMEONE TO KILL ME, IT HAD BETTER BE AN ARMY.
LIARA! DON'T DO SOMETHING YOU'RE GOING TO REGRET-- ≑FZZT≑


REMIND ME TO NEVER GET ON YOUR BAD SIDE.
COME ON. LET'S FIND A MED STATION AND GET YOU PATCHED UP.
THERE WERE OTHER SHUTTLES INSIDE THE BAY WE CRASHED. CAN YOU GET ONE WORKING?
PROVIDING THAT PSYCHO WITH THE SWORD DIDN'T DO TO THEM WHAT SHE DID TO EVERYTHING ELSE HERE...SURE.
ADMIRAL HACKETT.
DOCTOR T'SONI. PLEASE TELL ME YOU HAVE GOOD NEWS.
IT'S NOT EXACTLY WHAT WE WANTED, BUT I HAVE A LEAD ON SOMETHING THAT ***COULD HELP*** TURN THE TIDE ON THE REAPERS.
I'LL NEED YOU TO PULL SOME STRINGS, THOUGH, AND GET ME ACCESS TO A ***TOP-SECRET FACILITY...***

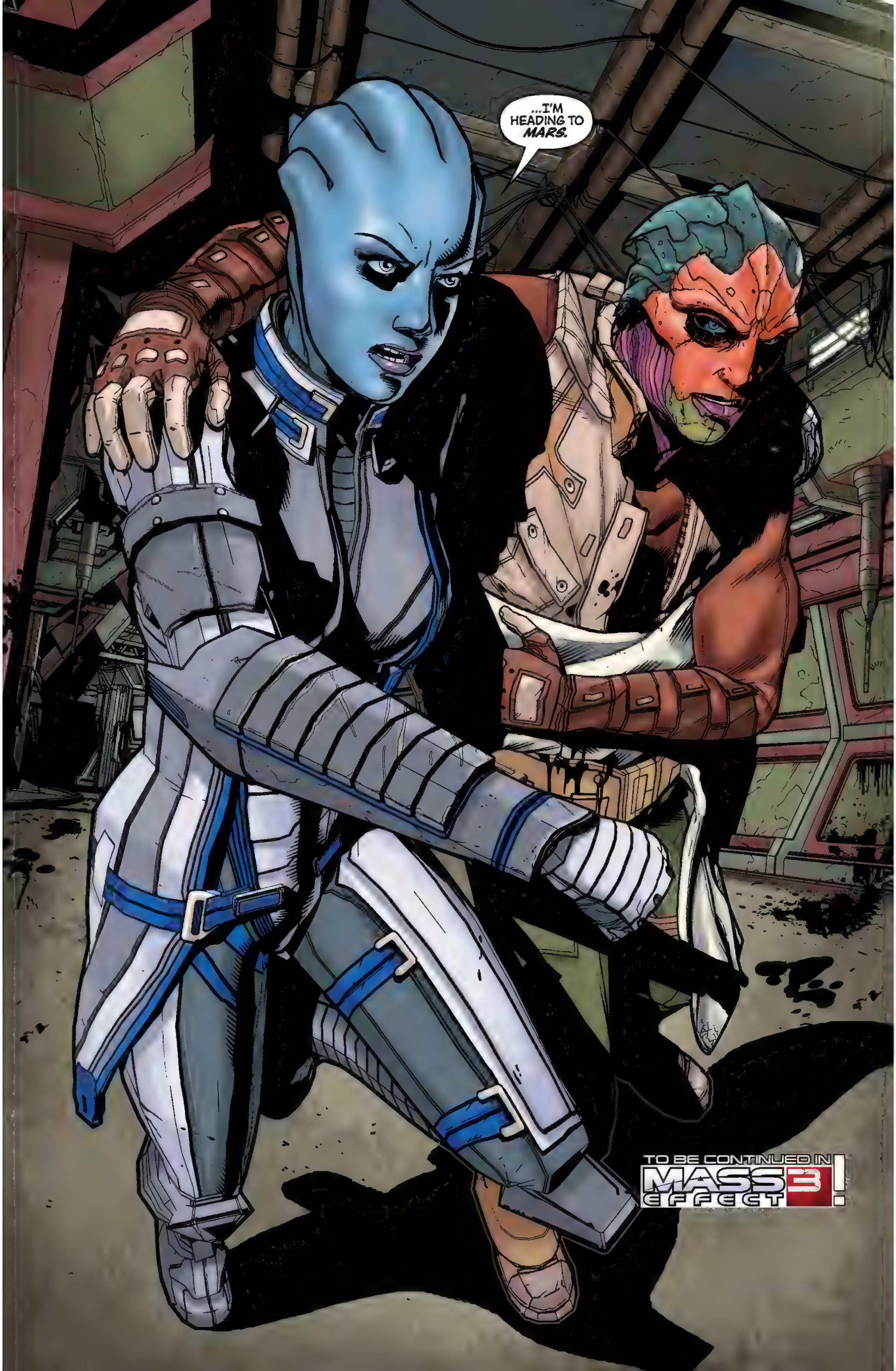

...I'M HEADING TO *MARS.*
TO BE CONTINUED IN
MASS EFFECT 3!

Illustration by Ben Huen

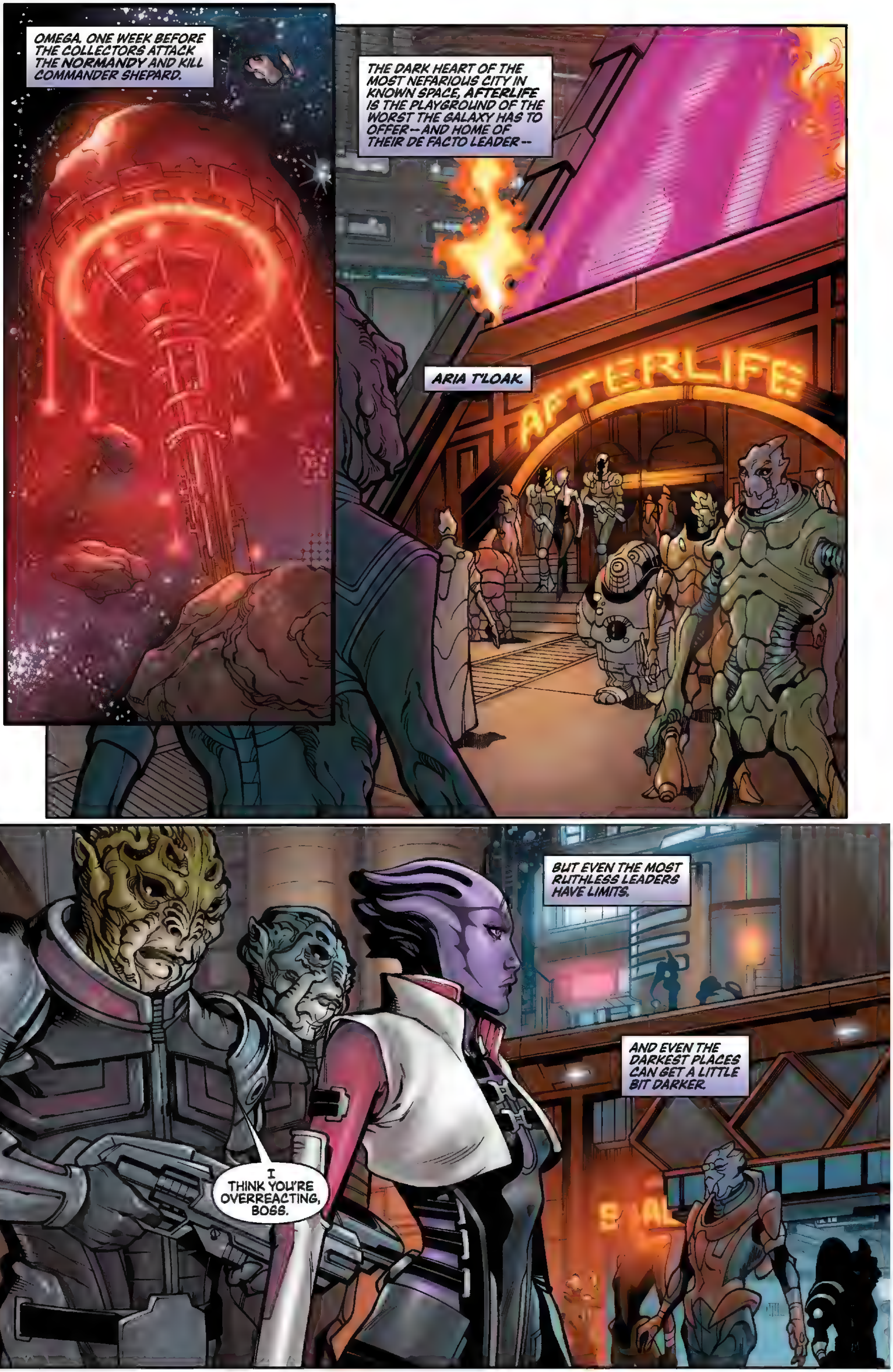
INCURSION

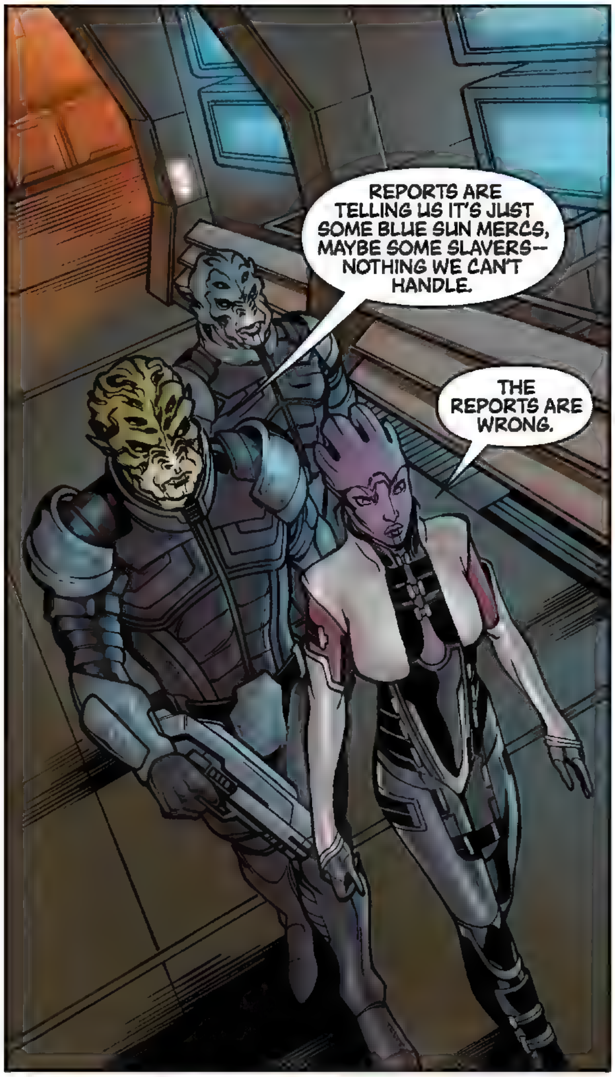
STORY
Mac Walters

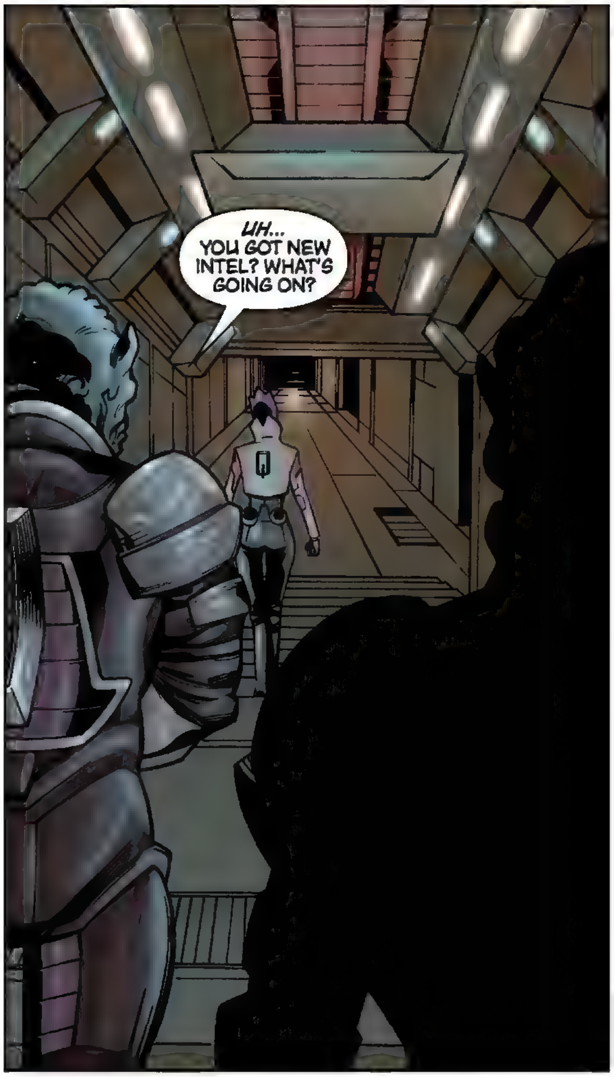
ART
Eduardo Francisco

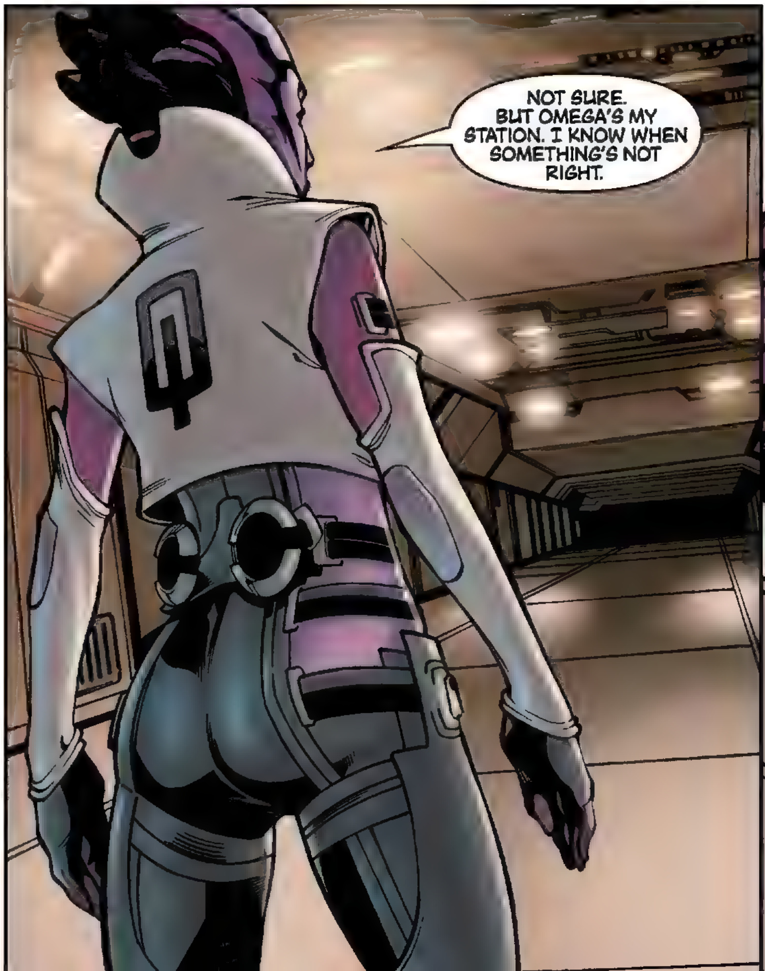
COLORS
Michael Atiyeh

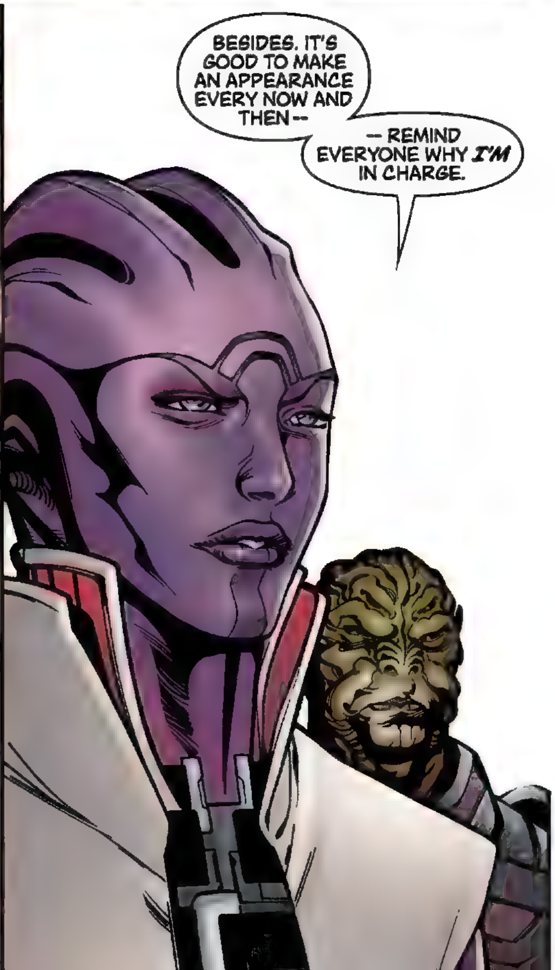
LETTERING
Michael Heisler

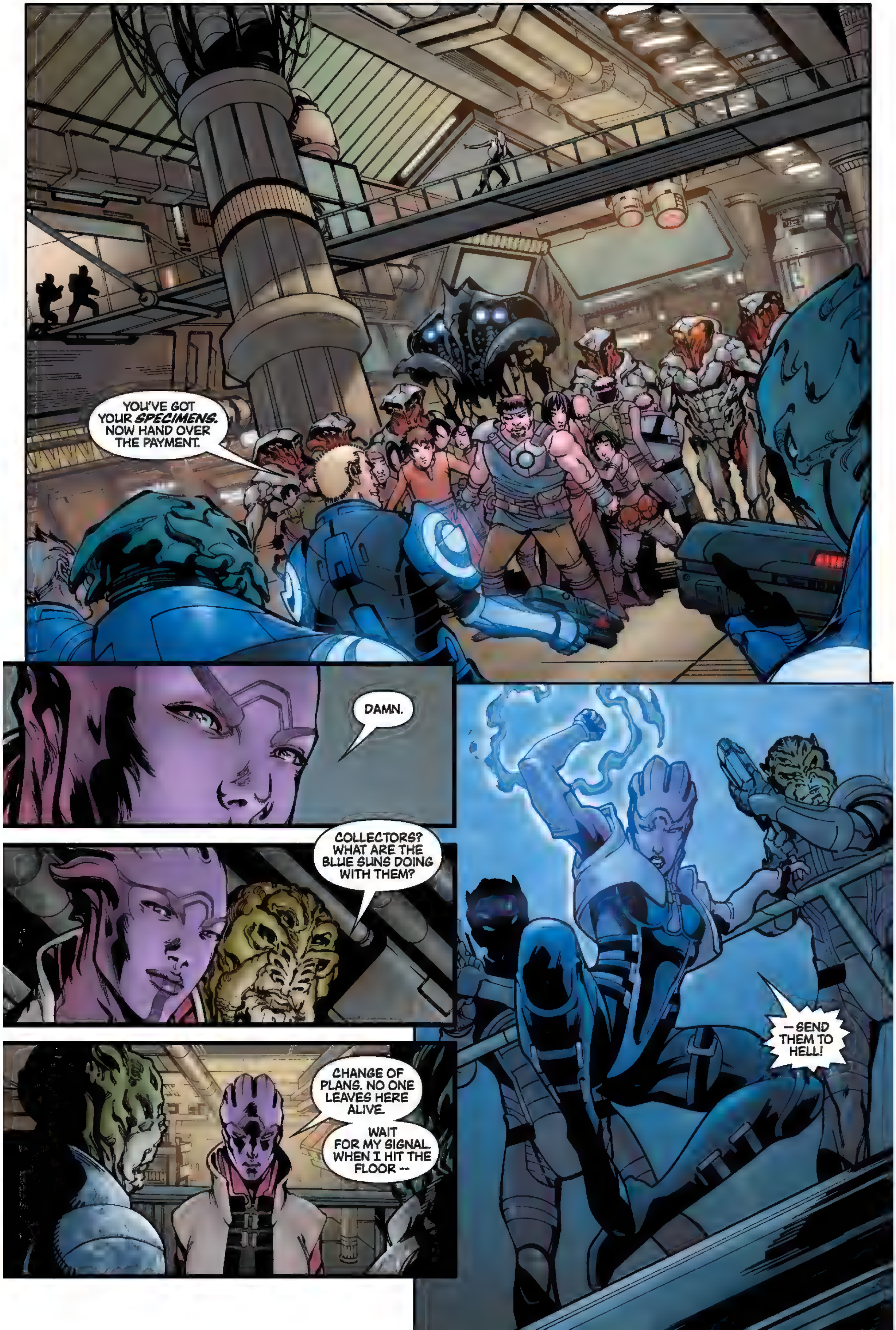

OMEGA. ONE WEEK BEFORE THE COLLECTORS ATTACK THE NORMANDY AND KILL COMMANDER SHEPARD.
THE DARK HEART OF THE MOST NEFARIOUS CITY IN KNOWN SPACE, AFTERLIFE IS THE PLAYGROUND OF THE WORST THE GALAXY HAS TO OFFER -- AND HOME OF THEIR DE FACTO LEADER --
ARIA T'LOAK.
AFTERLIFE
BUT EVEN THE MOST RUTHLESS LEADERS HAVE LIMITS.
AND EVEN THE DARKEST PLACES CAN GET A LITTLE BIT DARKER.
I THINK YOU'RE OVERREACTING, BOSS.

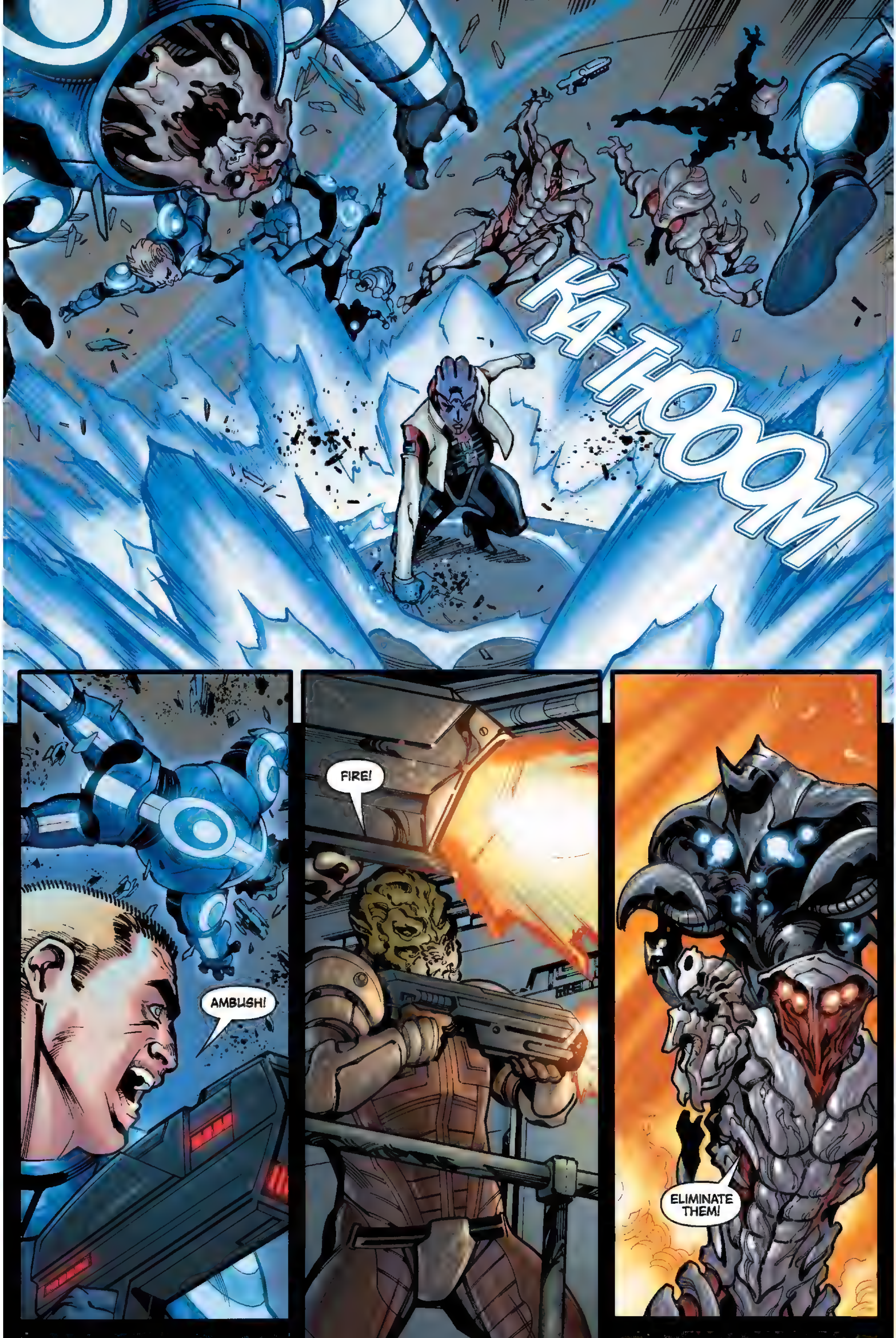

REPORTS ARE TELLING US IT'S JUST SOME BLUE SUN MERCS, MAYBE SOME SLAVERS-- NOTHING WE CAN'T HANDLE.
THE REPORTS ARE WRONG.

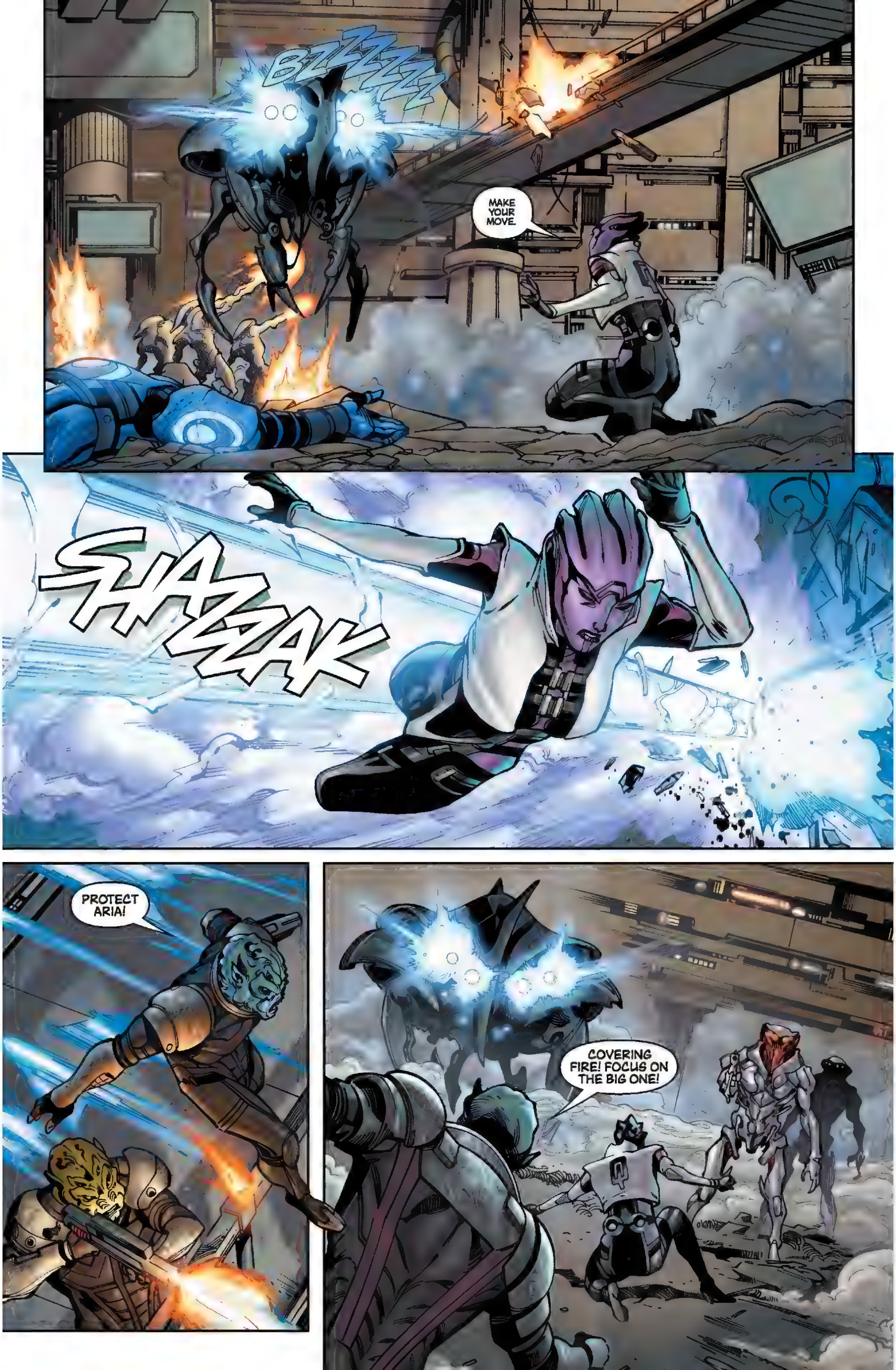

UH... YOU GOT NEW INTEL? WHAT'S GOING ON?

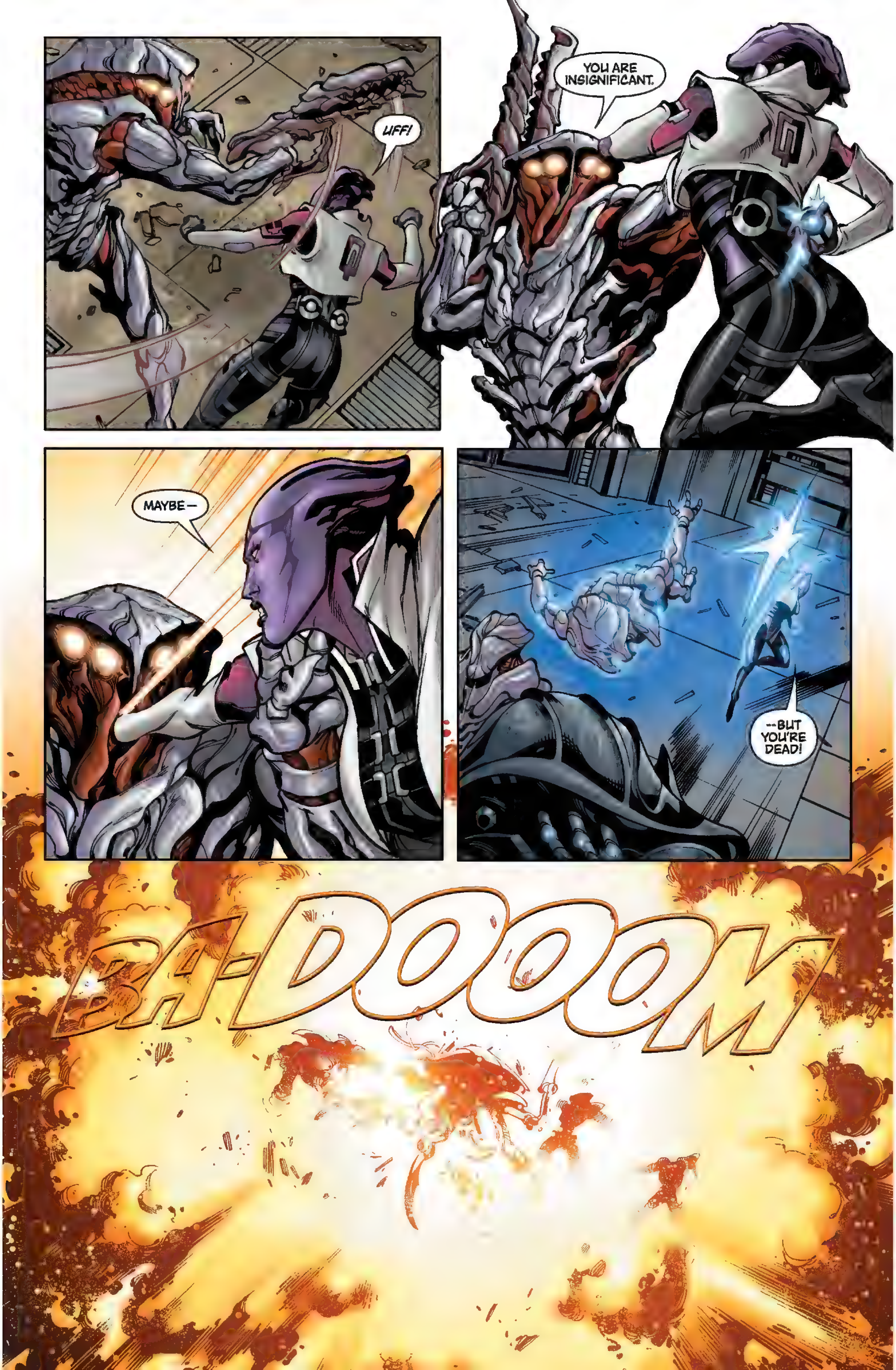

NOT SURE. BUT OMEGA'S MY STATION. I KNOW WHEN SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT.

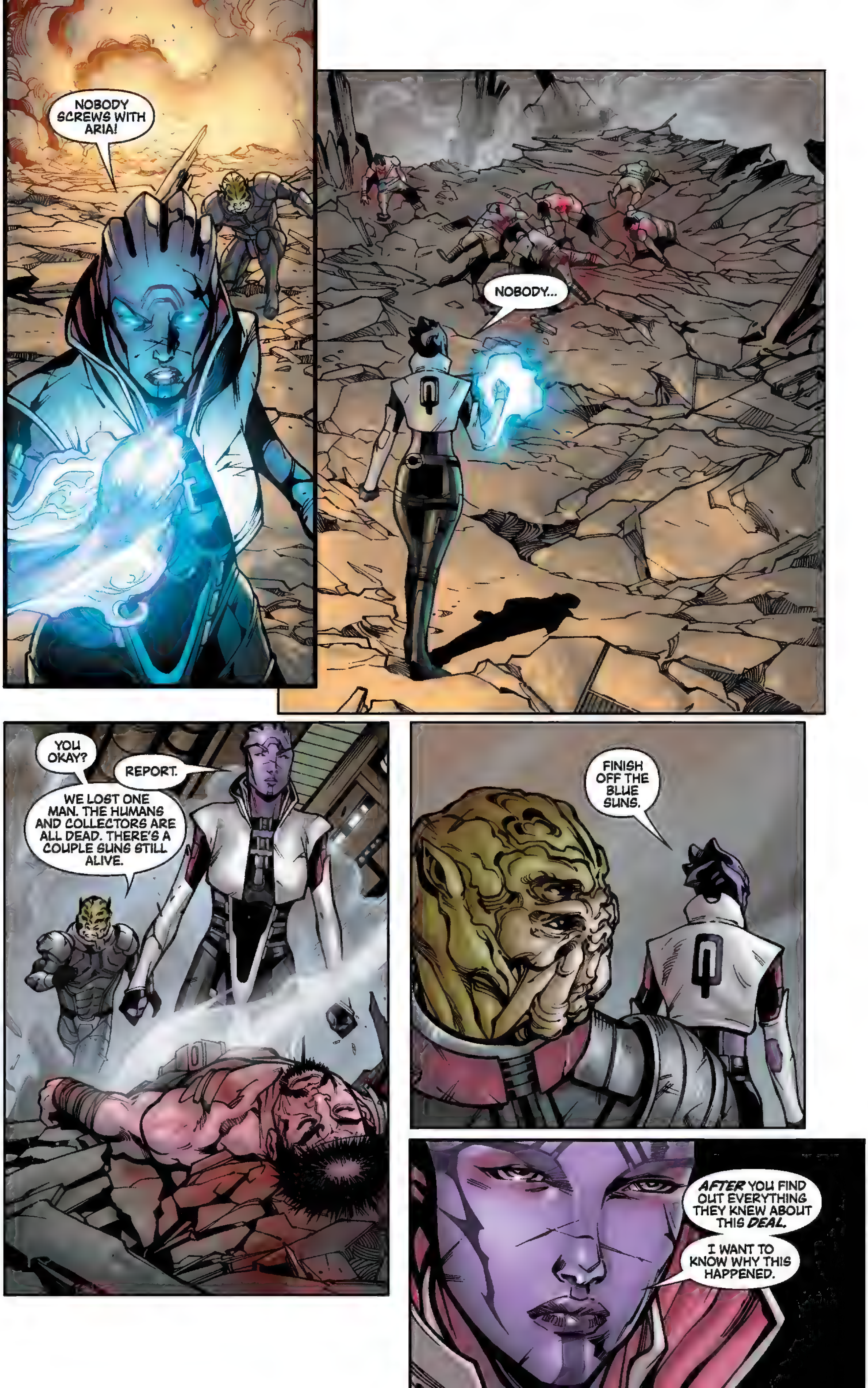

BESIDES. IT'S GOOD TO MAKE AN APPEARANCE EVERY NOW AND THEN--
-- REMIND EVERYONE WHY *I'M* IN CHARGE.


YOU'VE GOT YOUR *SPECIMENS.* NOW HAND OVER THE PAYMENT.
DAMN.
COLLECTORS? WHAT ARE THE BLUE SUNS DOING WITH THEM?
CHANGE OF PLANS. NO ONE LEAVES HERE ALIVE.
WAIT FOR MY SIGNAL. WHEN I HIT THE FLOOR --
-- SEND THEM TO HELL!


KA-THOOM
AMBUSH!
FIRE!
ELIMINATE THEM!


BZZZZZZZ
MAKE YOUR MOVE.
SHAZZAK
PROTECT ARIA!
COVERING FIRE! FOCUS ON THE BIG ONE!


UFF!
YOU ARE INSIGNIFICANT.
MAYBE—
--BUT YOU'RE DEAD!
BA-DOOOM


NOBODY SCREWS WITH ARIA!
NOBODY...
YOU OKAY?
REPORT.
WE LOST ONE MAN. THE HUMANS AND COLLECTORS ARE ALL DEAD. THERE'S A COUPLE SUNS STILL ALIVE.
FINISH OFF THE BLUE SUNS.
AFTER YOU FIND OUT EVERYTHING THEY KNEW ABOUT THIS *DEAL*.
I WANT TO KNOW WHY THIS HAPPENED.

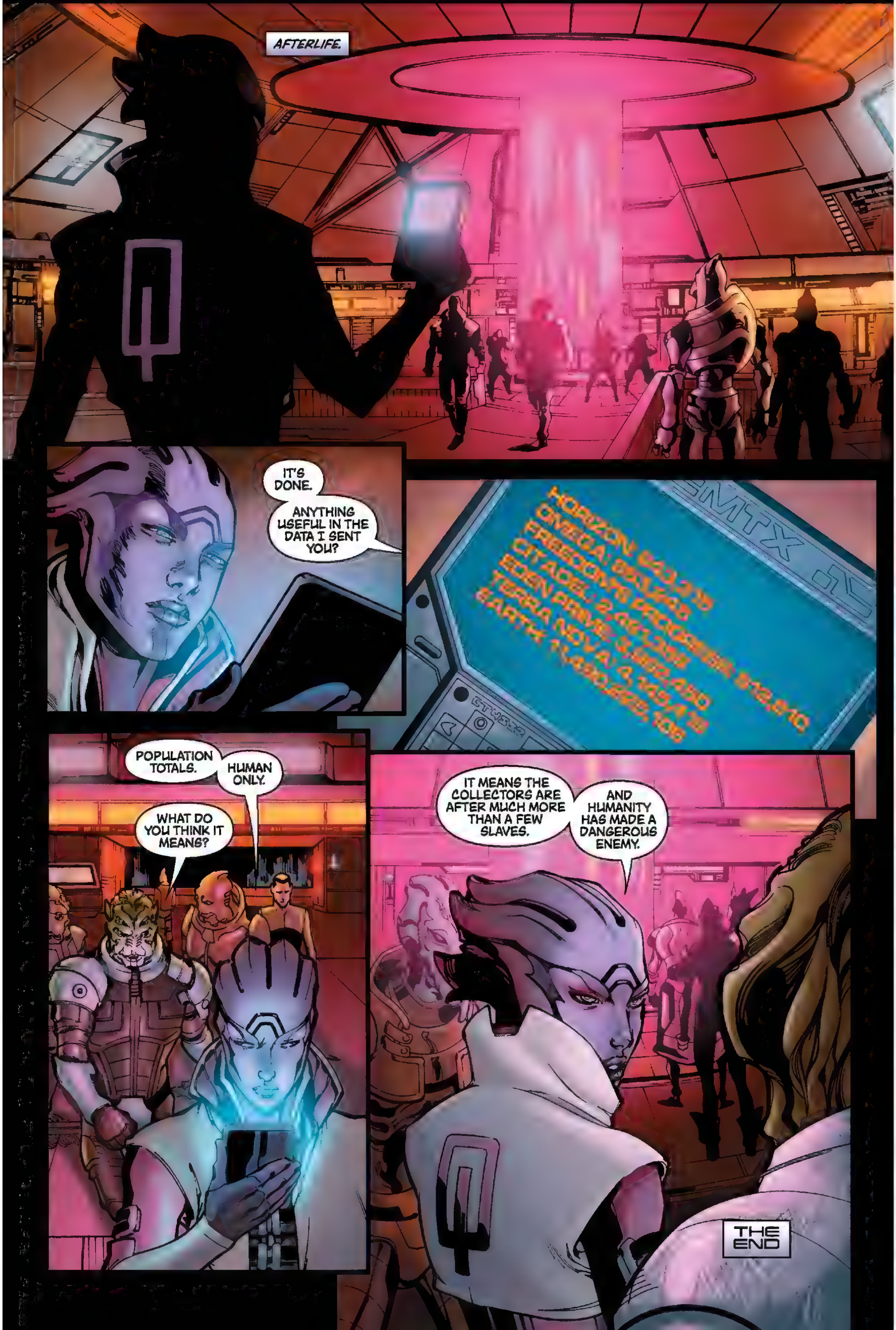

AFTERLIFE.
IT'S DONE.
ANYTHING USEFUL IN THE DATA I SENT YOU?
HORIZON: [illegible]
OMEGA: [illegible]
FREEDOM'S PROGRESS: [illegible]
CITADEL: [illegible]
EDEN PRIME: [illegible]
TERRA NOVA: [illegible]
EARTH: [illegible]
EMTX
POPULATION TOTALS.
HUMAN ONLY.
WHAT DO YOU THINK IT MEANS?
IT MEANS THE COLLECTORS ARE AFTER MUCH MORE THAN A FEW SLAVES.
AND HUMANITY HAS MADE A DANGEROUS ENEMY.
THE END

Illustration by Joe Quinones

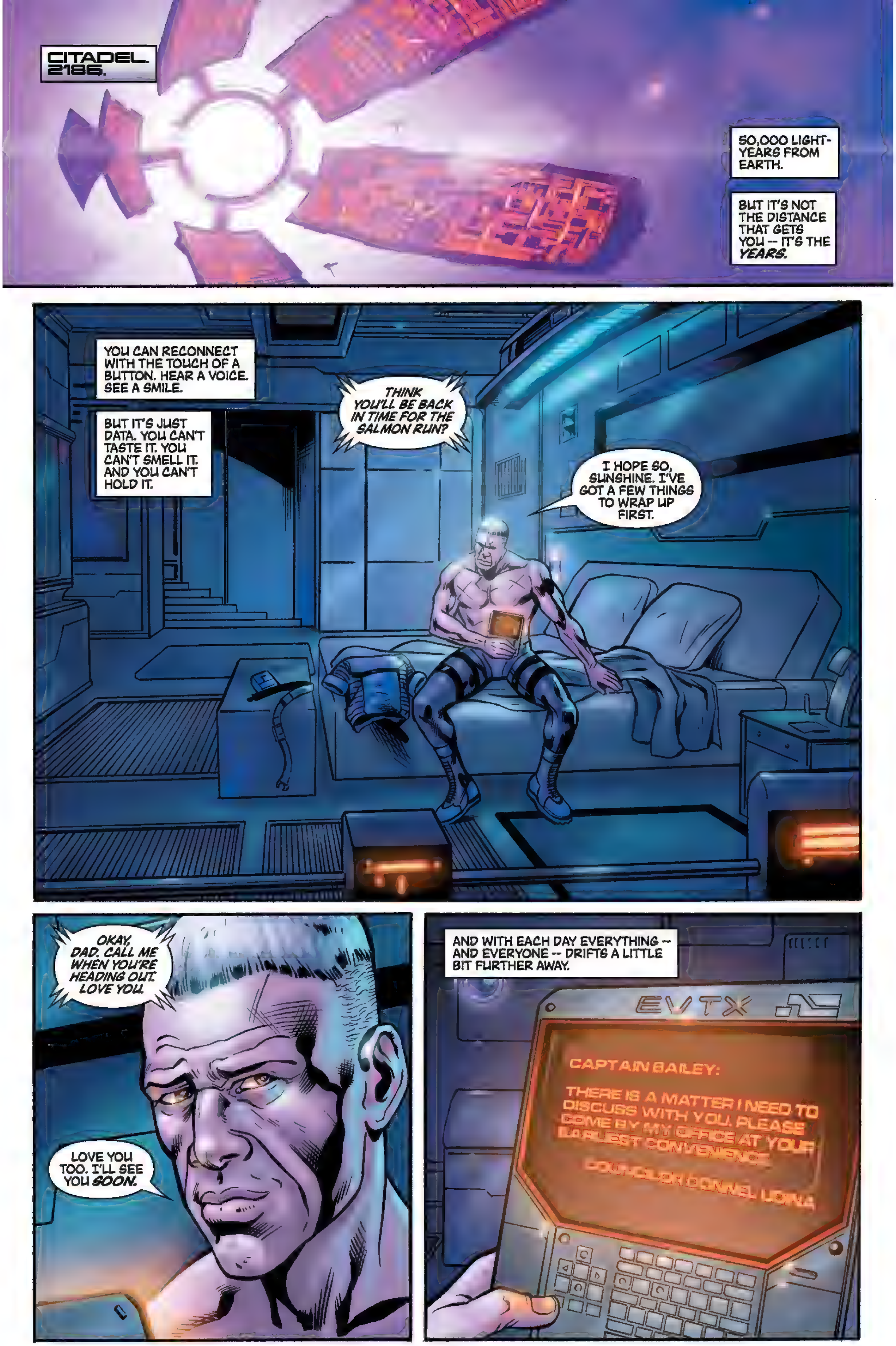
INQUISITION

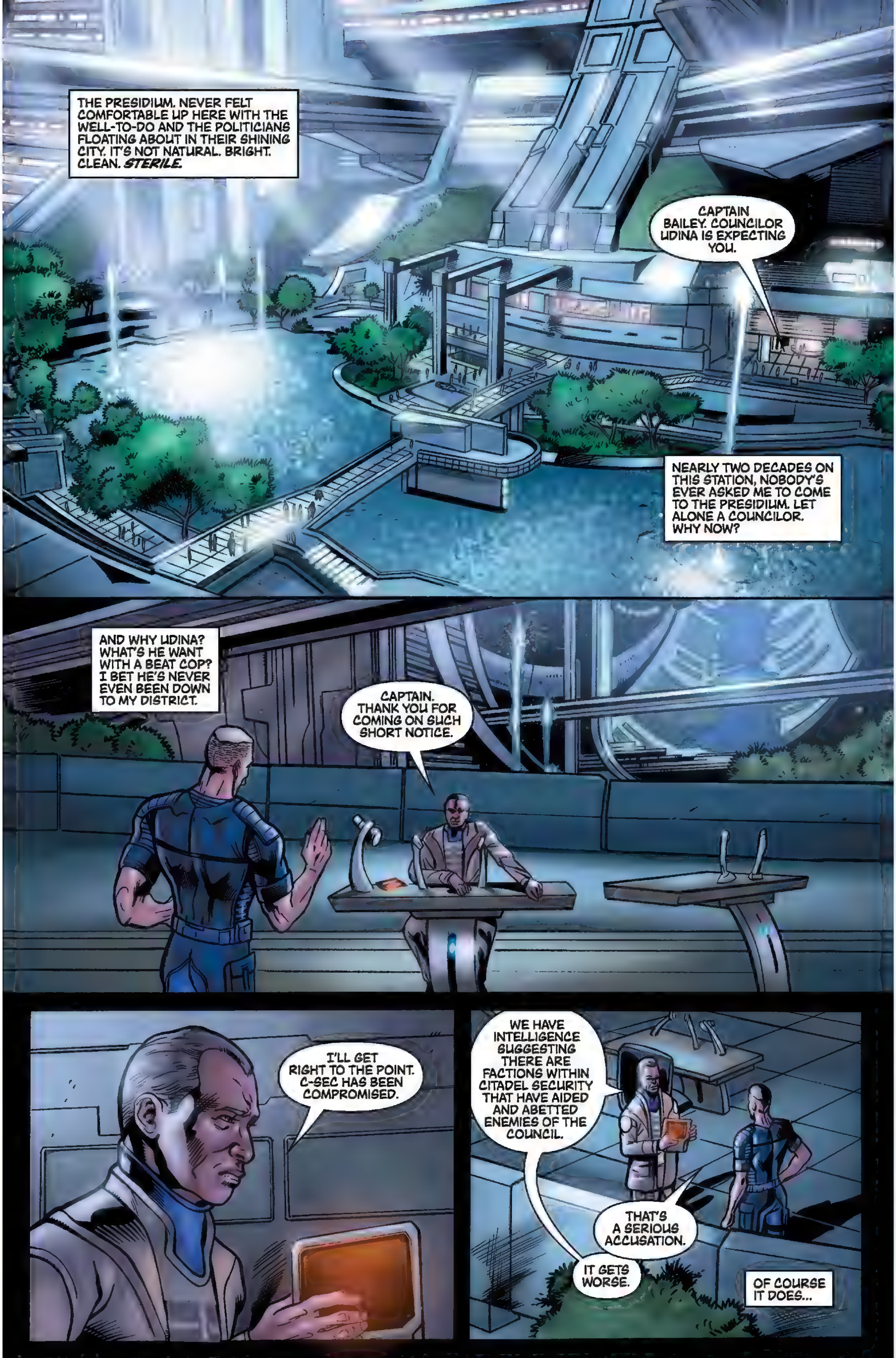
STORY
Mac Walters

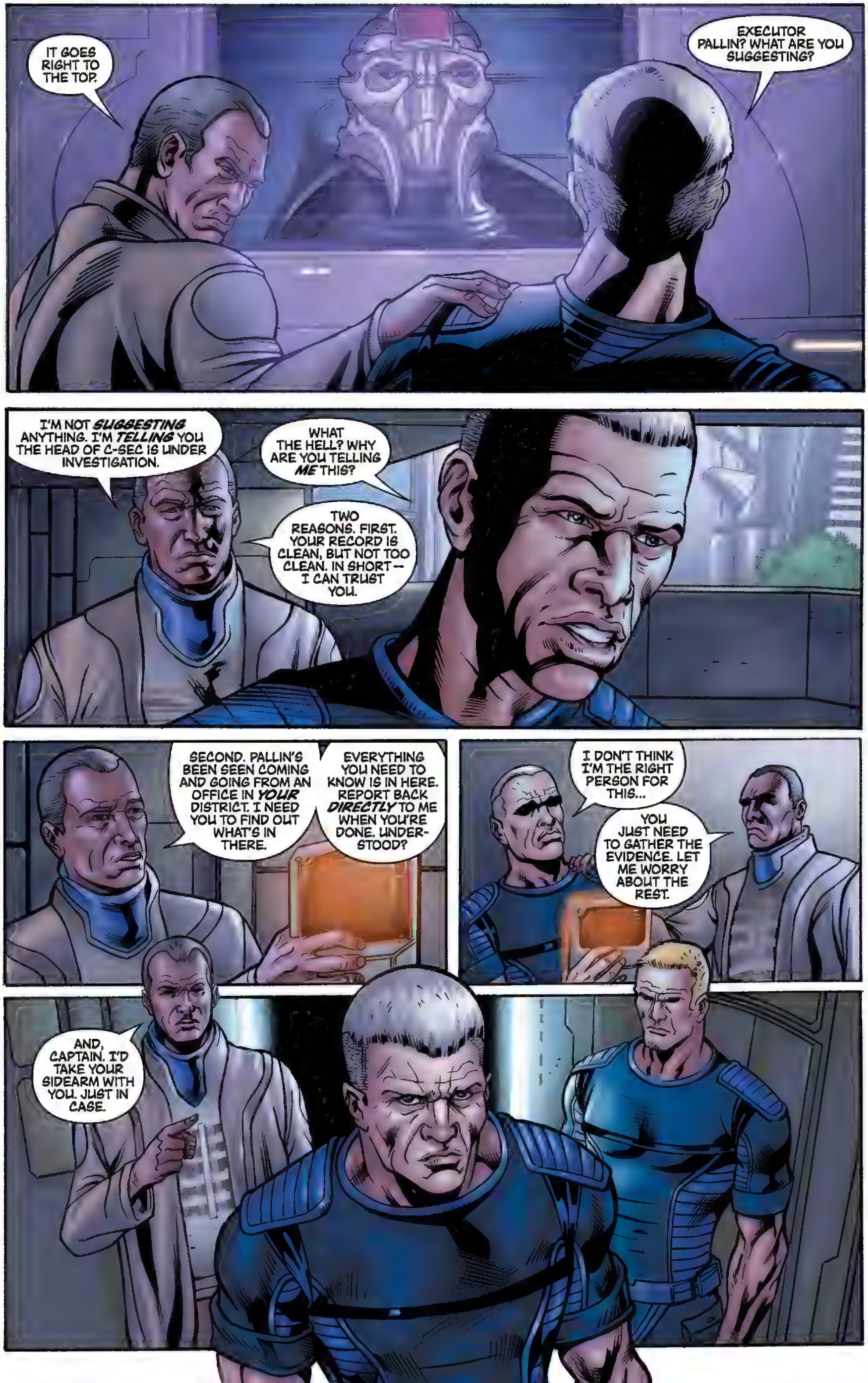
ART
Jean Diaz

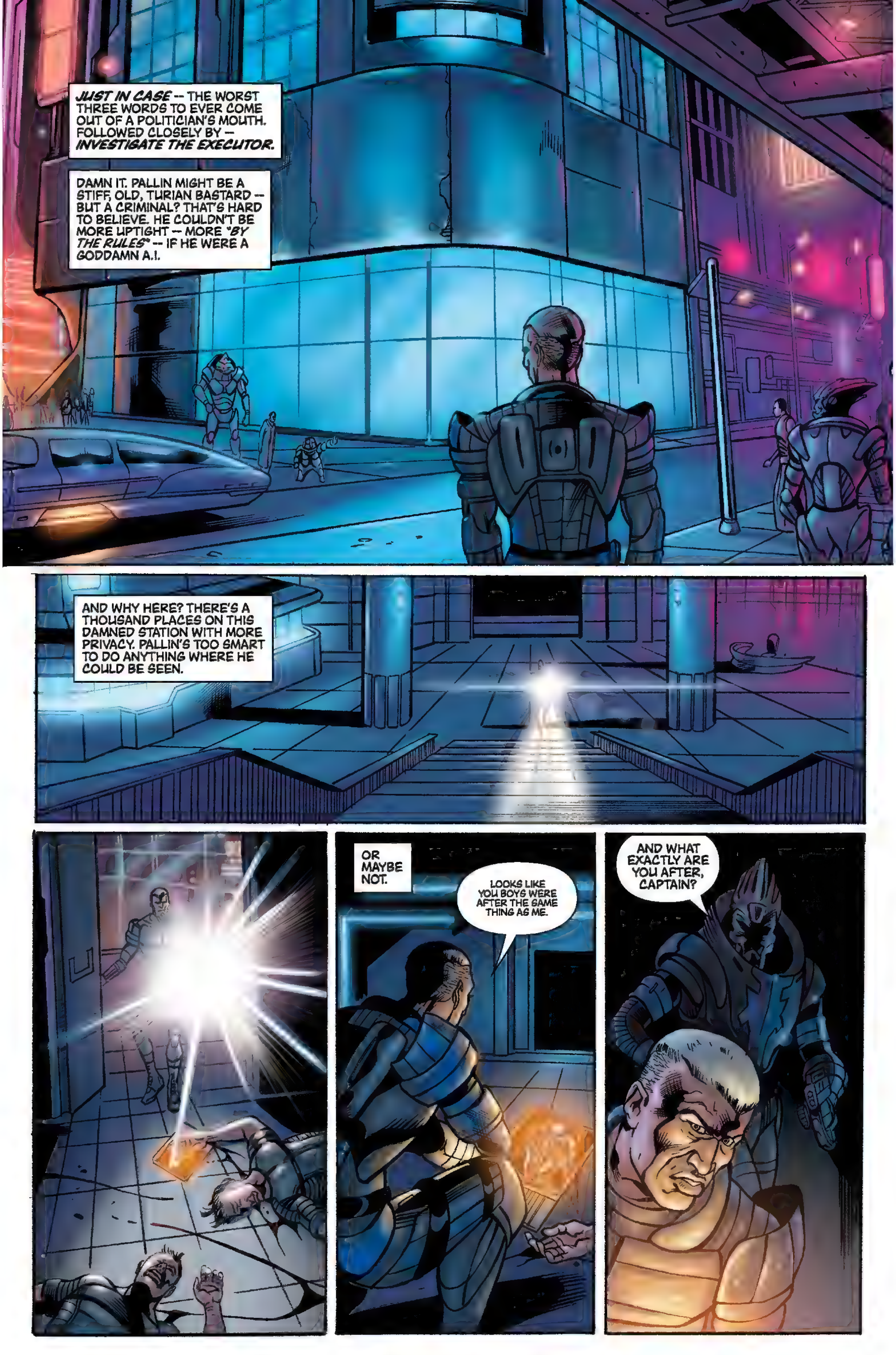
COLORS
Michael Atiyeh

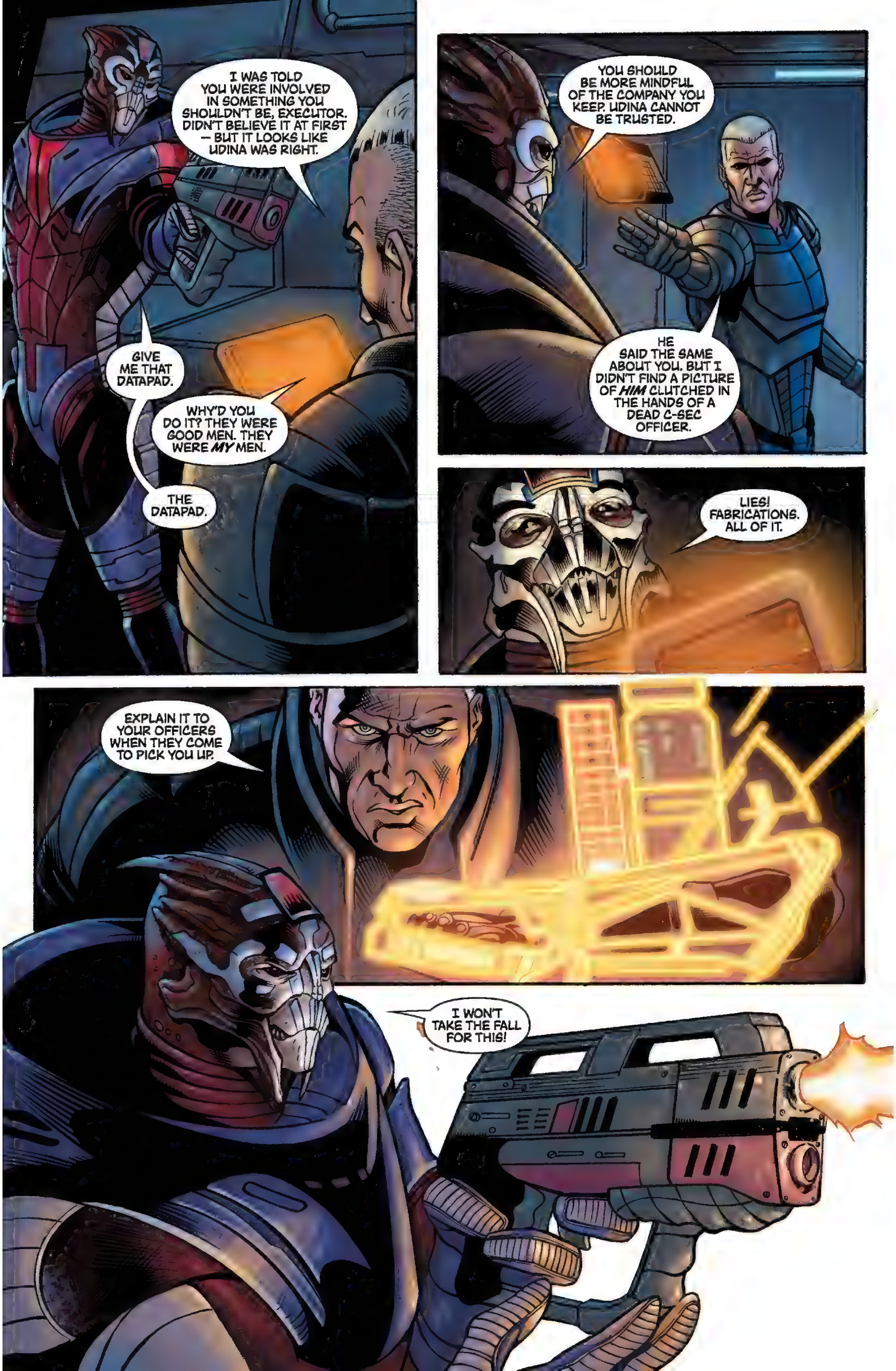
LETTERING
Michael Heisler

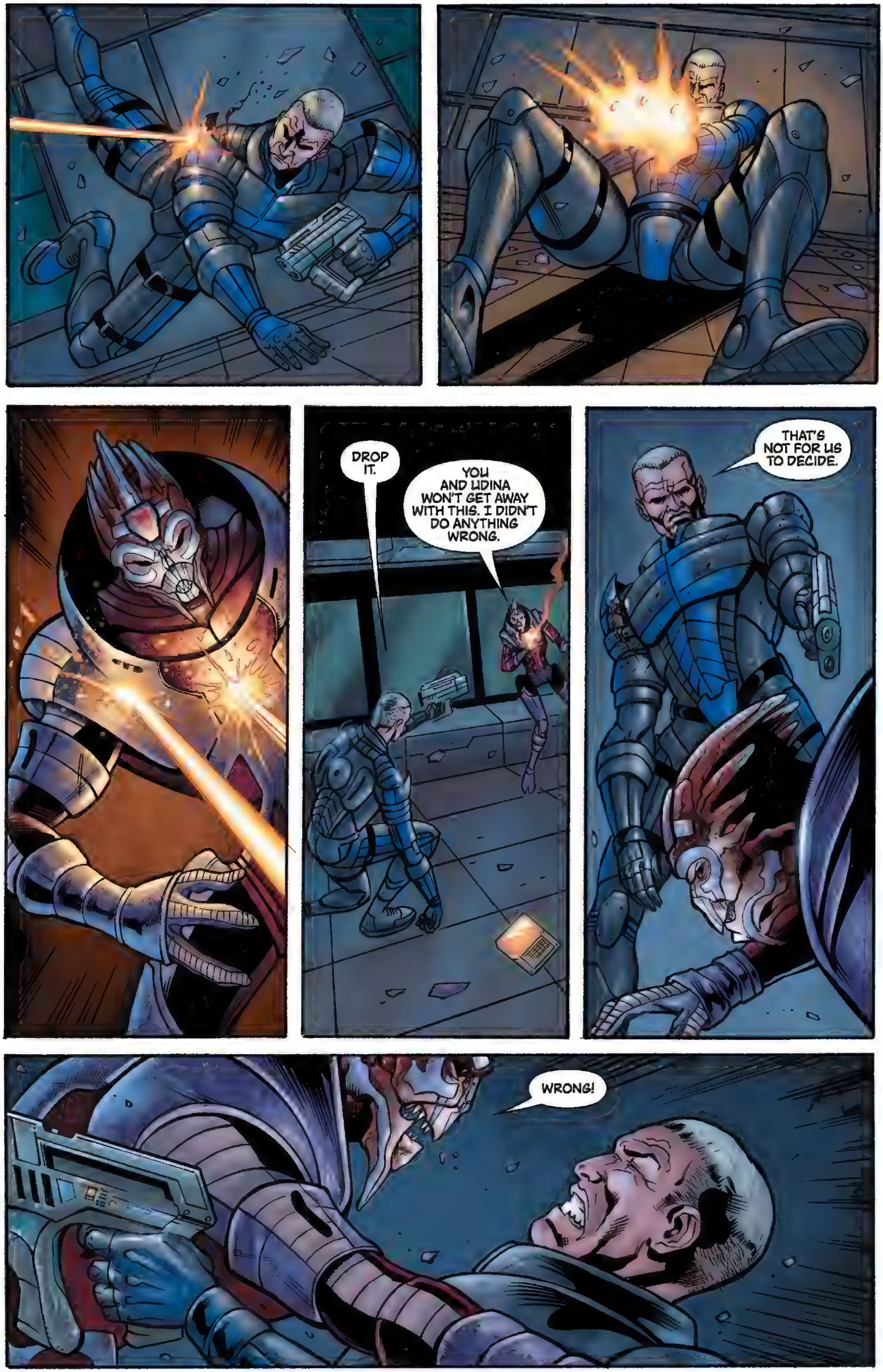

CITADEL. 2186.
50,000 LIGHT-YEARS FROM EARTH.
BUT IT'S NOT THE DISTANCE THAT GETS YOU -- IT'S THE *YEARS.*
YOU CAN RECONNECT WITH THE TOUCH OF A BUTTON. HEAR A VOICE. SEE A SMILE.
BUT IT'S JUST DATA. YOU CAN'T TASTE IT. YOU CAN'T SMELL IT. AND YOU CAN'T HOLD IT.
THINK YOU'LL BE BACK IN TIME FOR THE SALMON RUN?
I HOPE SO, SUNSHINE. I'VE GOT A FEW THINGS TO WRAP UP FIRST.
OKAY, DAD. CALL ME WHEN YOU'RE HEADING OUT. LOVE YOU.
LOVE YOU TOO. I'LL SEE YOU *SOON.*
AND WITH EACH DAY EVERYTHING -- AND EVERYONE -- DRIFTS A LITTLE BIT FURTHER AWAY.
EVTX
CAPTAIN BAILEY:
THERE IS A MATTER I NEED TO DISCUSS WITH YOU. PLEASE COME BY MY OFFICE AT YOUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE.
COUNCILOR DONNEL UDINA

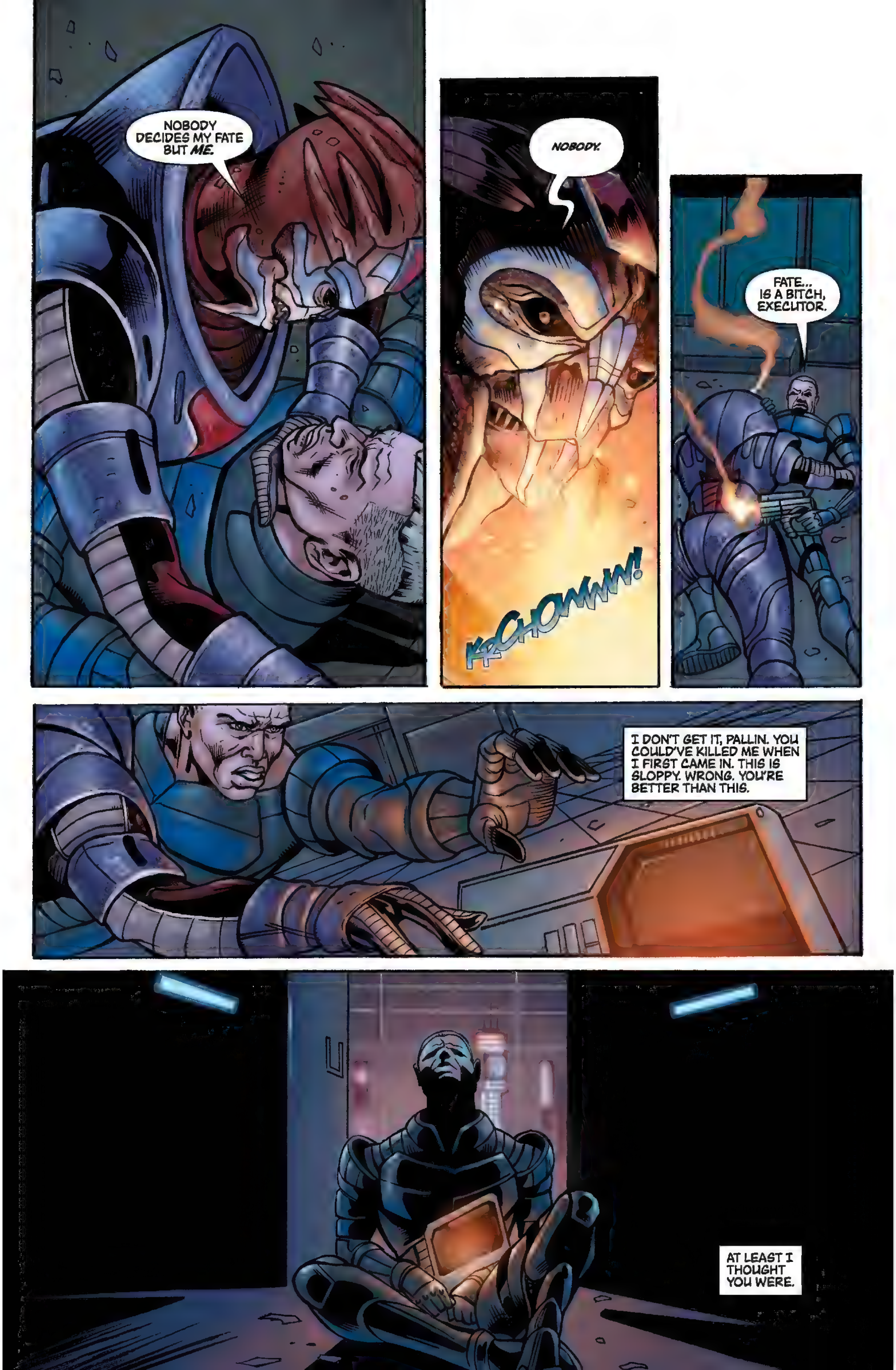

THE PRESIDIUM. NEVER FELT COMFORTABLE UP HERE WITH THE WELL-TO-DO AND THE POLITICIANS FLOATING ABOUT IN THEIR SHINING CITY. IT'S NOT NATURAL. BRIGHT. CLEAN. *STERILE.*
CAPTAIN BAILEY. COUNCILOR UDINA IS EXPECTING YOU.
NEARLY TWO DECADES ON THIS STATION, NOBODY'S EVER ASKED ME TO COME TO THE PRESIDIUM. LET ALONE A COUNCILOR. WHY NOW?
AND WHY UDINA? WHAT'S HE WANT WITH A BEAT COP? I BET HE'S NEVER EVEN BEEN DOWN TO MY DISTRICT.
CAPTAIN. THANK YOU FOR COMING ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE.
I'LL GET RIGHT TO THE POINT. C-SEC HAS BEEN COMPROMISED.
WE HAVE INTELLIGENCE SUGGESTING THERE ARE FACTIONS WITHIN CITADEL SECURITY THAT HAVE AIDED AND ABETTED ENEMIES OF THE COUNCIL.
THAT'S A SERIOUS ACCUSATION.
IT GETS WORSE.
OF COURSE IT DOES...


IT GOES RIGHT TO THE TOP.
EXECUTOR PALLIN? WHAT ARE YOU SUGGESTING?
I'M NOT *SUGGESTING* ANYTHING. I'M *TELLING* YOU THE HEAD OF C-SEC IS UNDER INVESTIGATION.
WHAT THE HELL? WHY ARE YOU TELLING *ME* THIS?
TWO REASONS. FIRST. YOUR RECORD IS CLEAN, BUT NOT TOO CLEAN. IN SHORT-- I CAN TRUST YOU.
SECOND. PALLIN'S BEEN SEEN COMING AND GOING FROM AN OFFICE IN *YOUR* DISTRICT. I NEED YOU TO FIND OUT WHAT'S IN THERE.
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW IS IN HERE. REPORT BACK *DIRECTLY* TO ME WHEN YOU'RE DONE. UNDERSTOOD?
I DON'T THINK I'M THE RIGHT PERSON FOR THIS...
YOU JUST NEED TO GATHER THE EVIDENCE. LET ME WORRY ABOUT THE REST.
AND, CAPTAIN. I'D TAKE YOUR SIDEARM WITH YOU. JUST IN CASE.


JUST IN CASE -- THE WORST THREE WORDS TO EVER COME OUT OF A POLITICIAN'S MOUTH. FOLLOWED CLOSELY BY -- *INVESTIGATE THE EXECUTOR.*
DAMN IT. PALLIN MIGHT BE A STIFF, OLD, TURIAN BASTARD -- BUT A CRIMINAL? THAT'S HARD TO BELIEVE. HE COULDN'T BE MORE UPTIGHT -- MORE *"BY THE RULES"* -- IF HE WERE A GODDAMN A.I.
AND WHY HERE? THERE'S A THOUSAND PLACES ON THIS DAMNED STATION WITH MORE PRIVACY. PALLIN'S TOO SMART TO DO ANYTHING WHERE HE COULD BE SEEN.
OR MAYBE NOT.
LOOKS LIKE YOU BOYS WERE AFTER THE SAME THING AS ME.
AND WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU AFTER, CAPTAIN?


I WAS TOLD YOU WERE INVOLVED IN SOMETHING YOU SHOULDN'T BE, EXECUTOR. DIDN'T BELIEVE IT AT FIRST — BUT IT LOOKS LIKE UDINA WAS RIGHT.
GIVE ME THAT DATAPAD.
WHY'D YOU DO IT? THEY WERE GOOD MEN. THEY WERE *MY* MEN.
THE DATAPAD.
YOU SHOULD BE MORE MINDFUL OF THE COMPANY YOU KEEP. UDINA CANNOT BE TRUSTED.
HE SAID THE SAME ABOUT YOU. BUT I DIDN'T FIND A PICTURE OF *HIM* CLUTCHED IN THE HANDS OF A DEAD C-SEC OFFICER.
LIES! FABRICATIONS. ALL OF IT.
EXPLAIN IT TO YOUR OFFICERS WHEN THEY COME TO PICK YOU UP.
I WON'T TAKE THE FALL FOR THIS!


DROP IT.
YOU AND UDINA WON'T GET AWAY WITH THIS. I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING WRONG.
THAT'S NOT FOR US TO DECIDE.
WRONG!


NOBODY DECIDES MY FATE BUT *ME.*
NOBODY.
KRCHOMMM!
FATE... IS A BITCH, EXECUTOR.
I DON'T GET IT, PALLIN. YOU COULD'VE KILLED ME WHEN I FIRST CAME IN. THIS IS SLOPPY. WRONG. YOU'RE BETTER THAN THIS.
AT LEAST I THOUGHT YOU WERE.

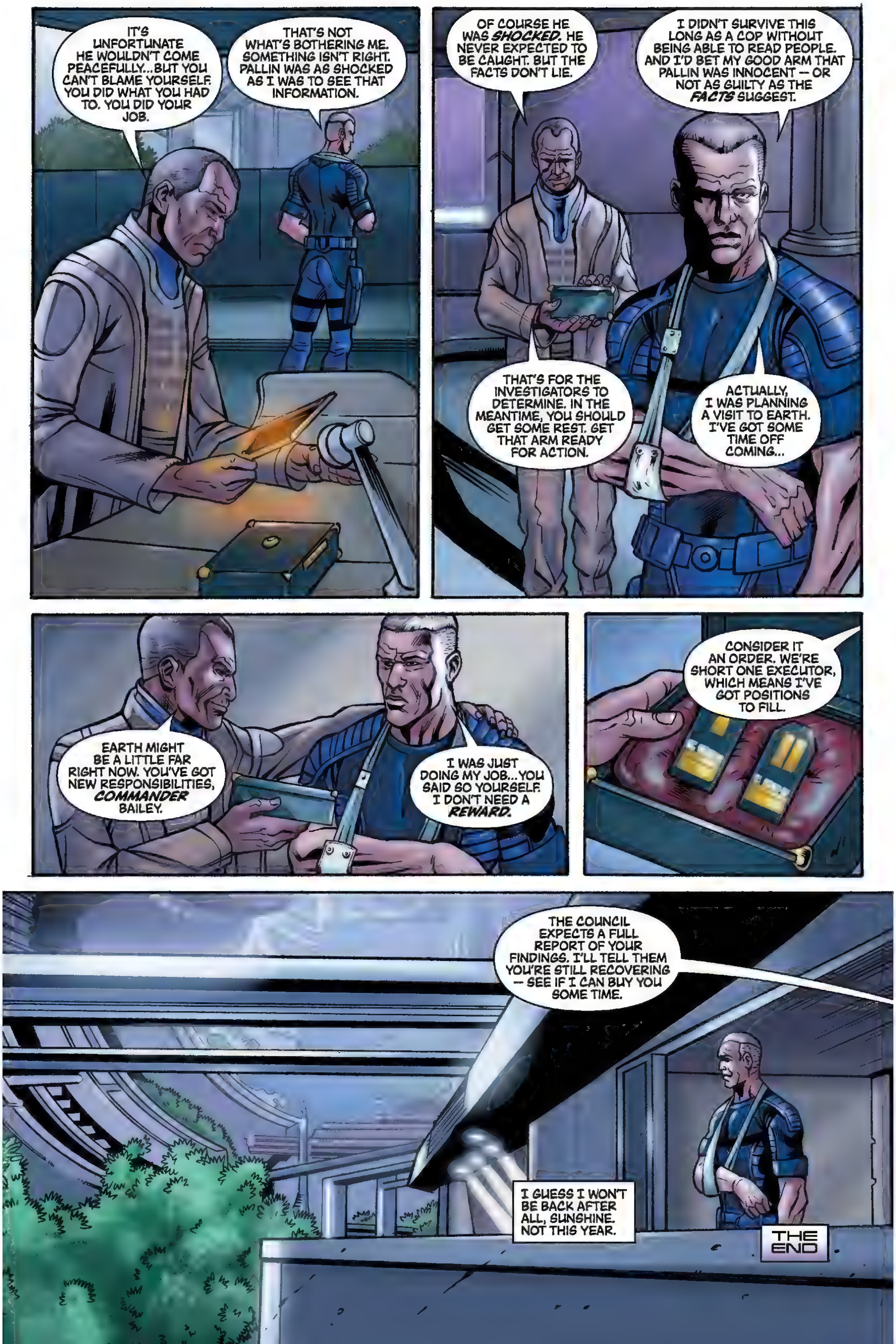

IT'S UNFORTUNATE HE WOULDN'T COME PEACEFULLY...BUT YOU CAN'T BLAME YOURSELF. YOU DID WHAT YOU HAD TO. YOU DID YOUR JOB.
THAT'S NOT WHAT'S BOTHERING ME. SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT. PALLIN WAS AS SHOCKED AS I WAS TO SEE THAT INFORMATION.
OF COURSE HE WAS *SHOCKED*. HE NEVER EXPECTED TO BE CAUGHT. BUT THE FACTS DON'T LIE.
I DIDN'T SURVIVE THIS LONG AS A COP WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO READ PEOPLE. AND I'D BET MY GOOD ARM THAT PALLIN WAS INNOCENT -- OR NOT AS GUILTY AS THE *FACTS* SUGGEST.
THAT'S FOR THE INVESTIGATORS TO DETERMINE. IN THE MEANTIME, YOU SHOULD GET SOME REST. GET THAT ARM READY FOR ACTION.
ACTUALLY, I WAS PLANNING A VISIT TO EARTH. I'VE GOT SOME TIME OFF COMING...
EARTH MIGHT BE A LITTLE FAR RIGHT NOW. YOU'VE GOT NEW RESPONSIBILITIES, *COMMANDER* BAILEY.
I WAS JUST DOING MY JOB...YOU SAID SO YOURSELF. I DON'T NEED A *REWARD*.
CONSIDER IT AN ORDER. WE'RE SHORT ONE EXECUTOR, WHICH MEANS I'VE GOT POSITIONS TO FILL.
THE COUNCIL EXPECTS A FULL REPORT OF YOUR FINDINGS. I'LL TELL THEM YOU'RE STILL RECOVERING -- SEE IF I CAN BUY YOU SOME TIME.
I GUESS I WON'T BE BACK AFTER ALL, SUNSHINE. NOT THIS YEAR.
THE END

Illustration by Joe Quinones

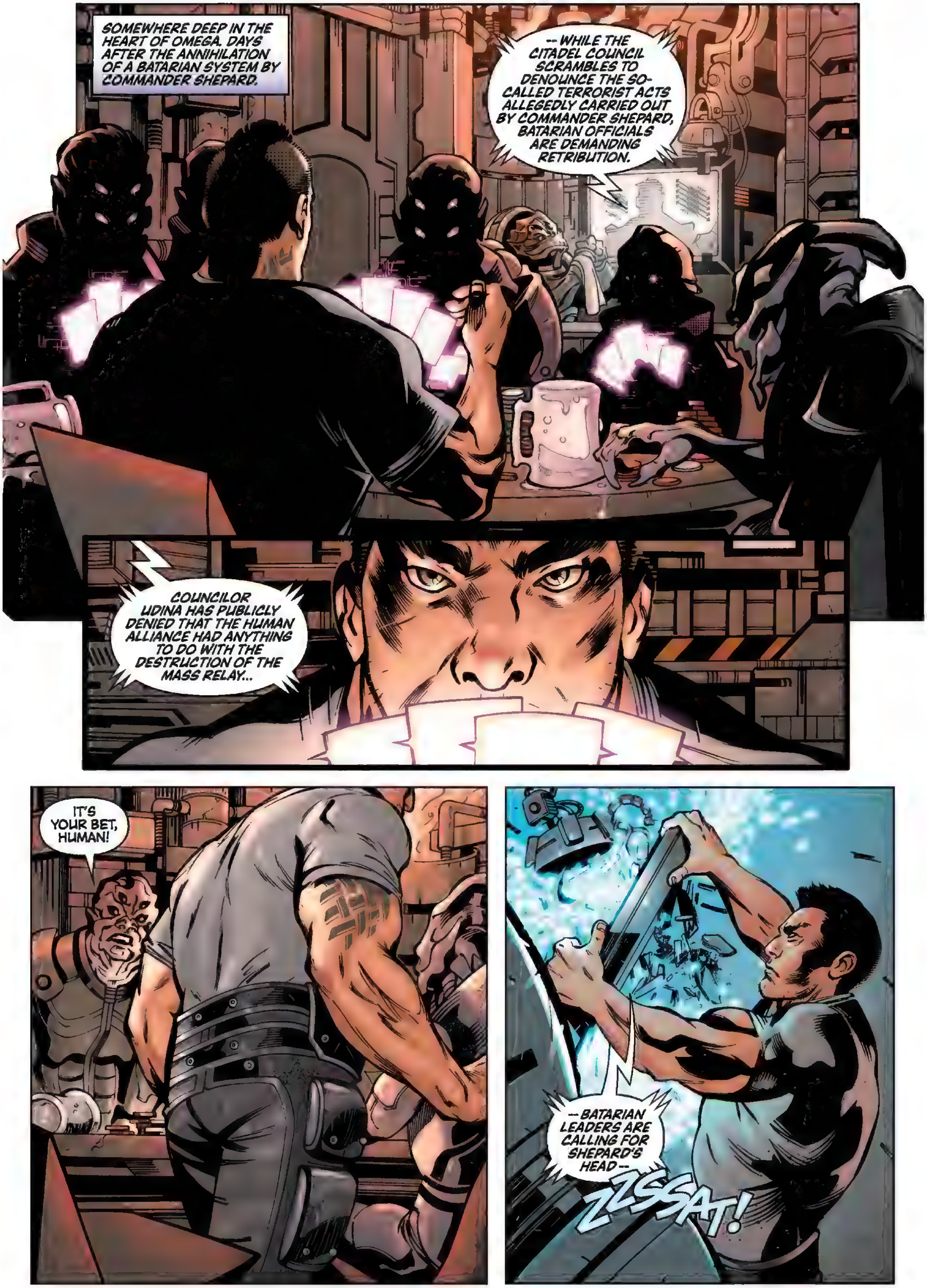
CONVICTION

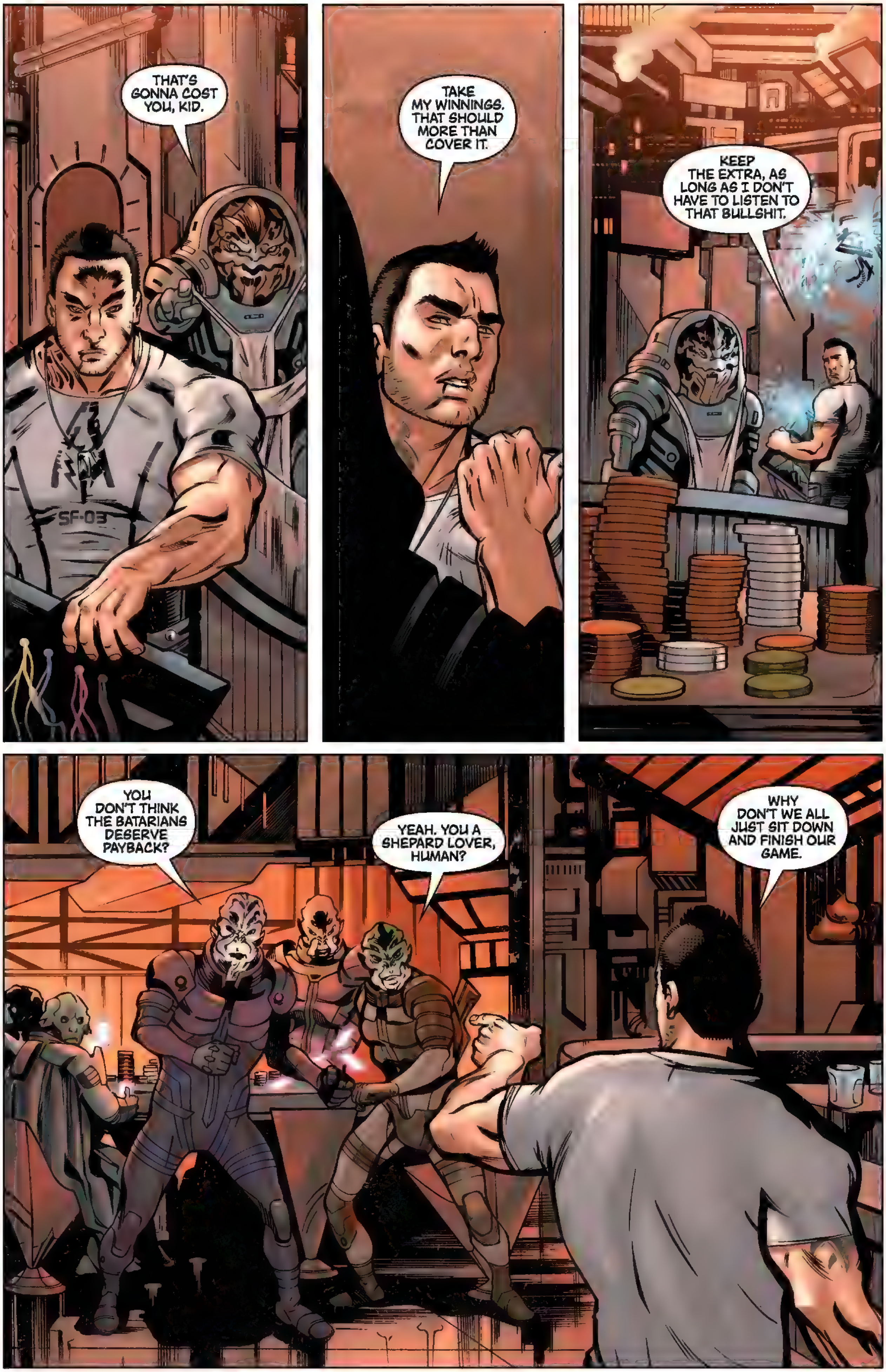
STORY
Mac Walters

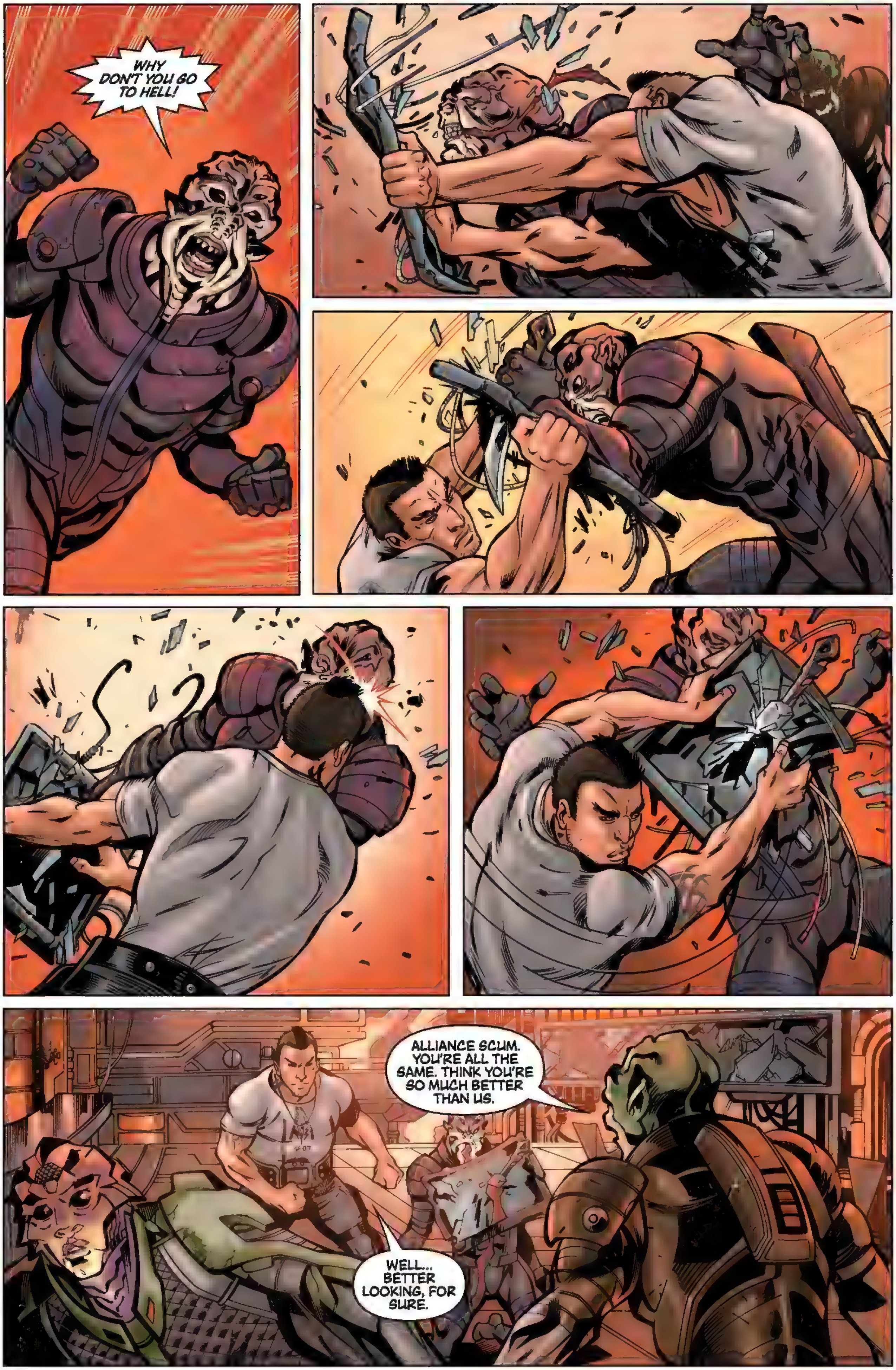
ART
Eduardo Francisco

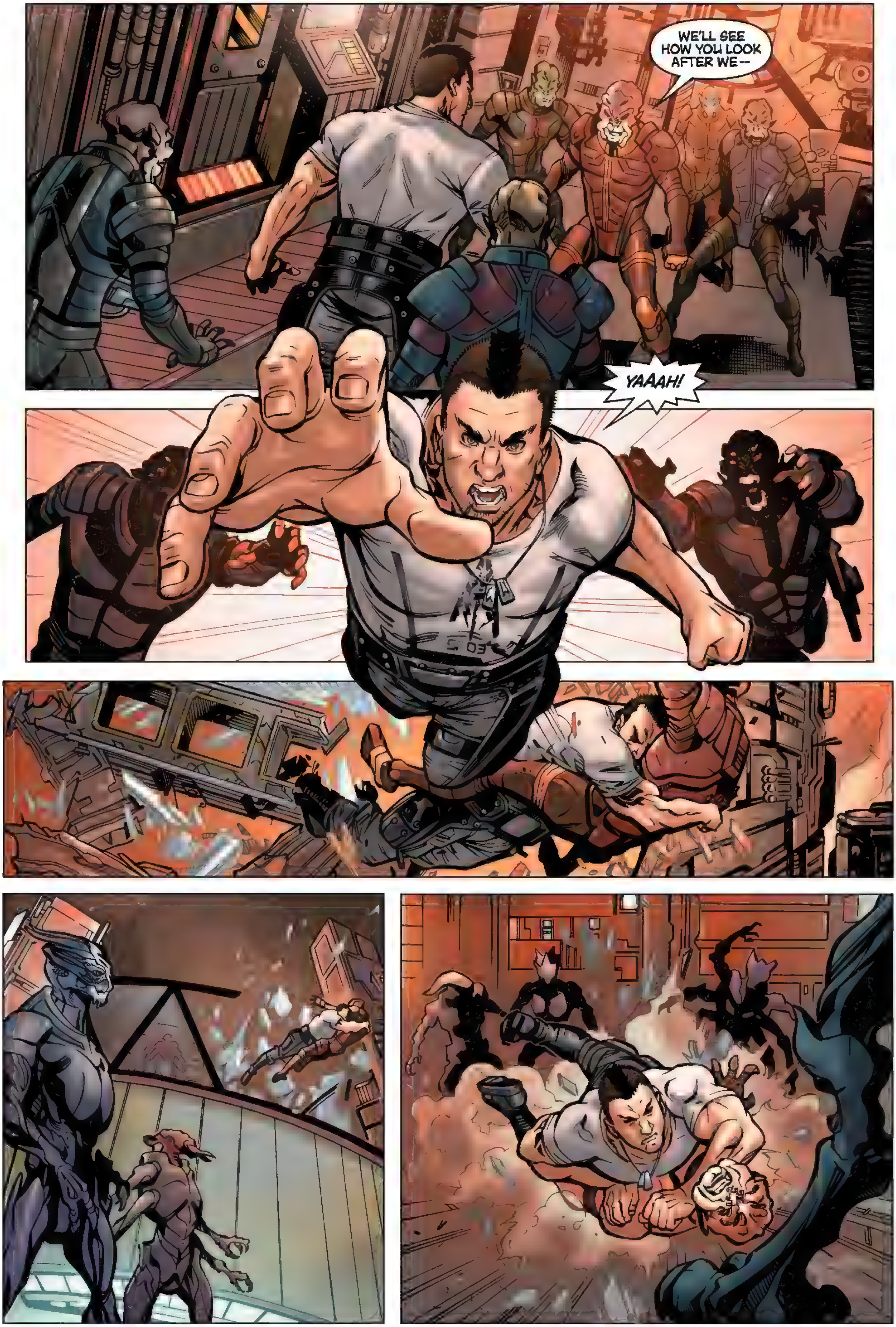
COLORS
Michael Atiyeh

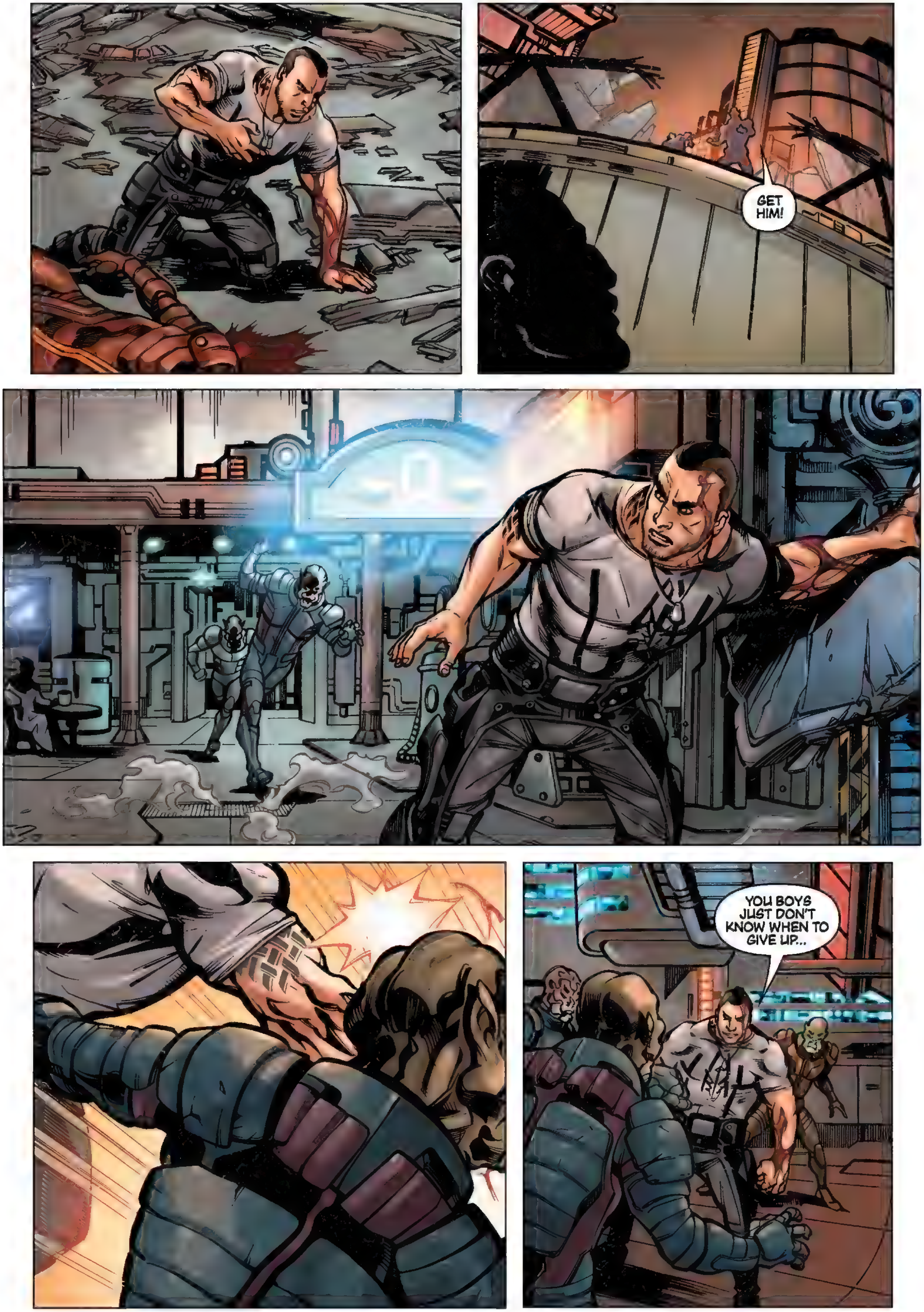
LETTERING
Michael Heisler

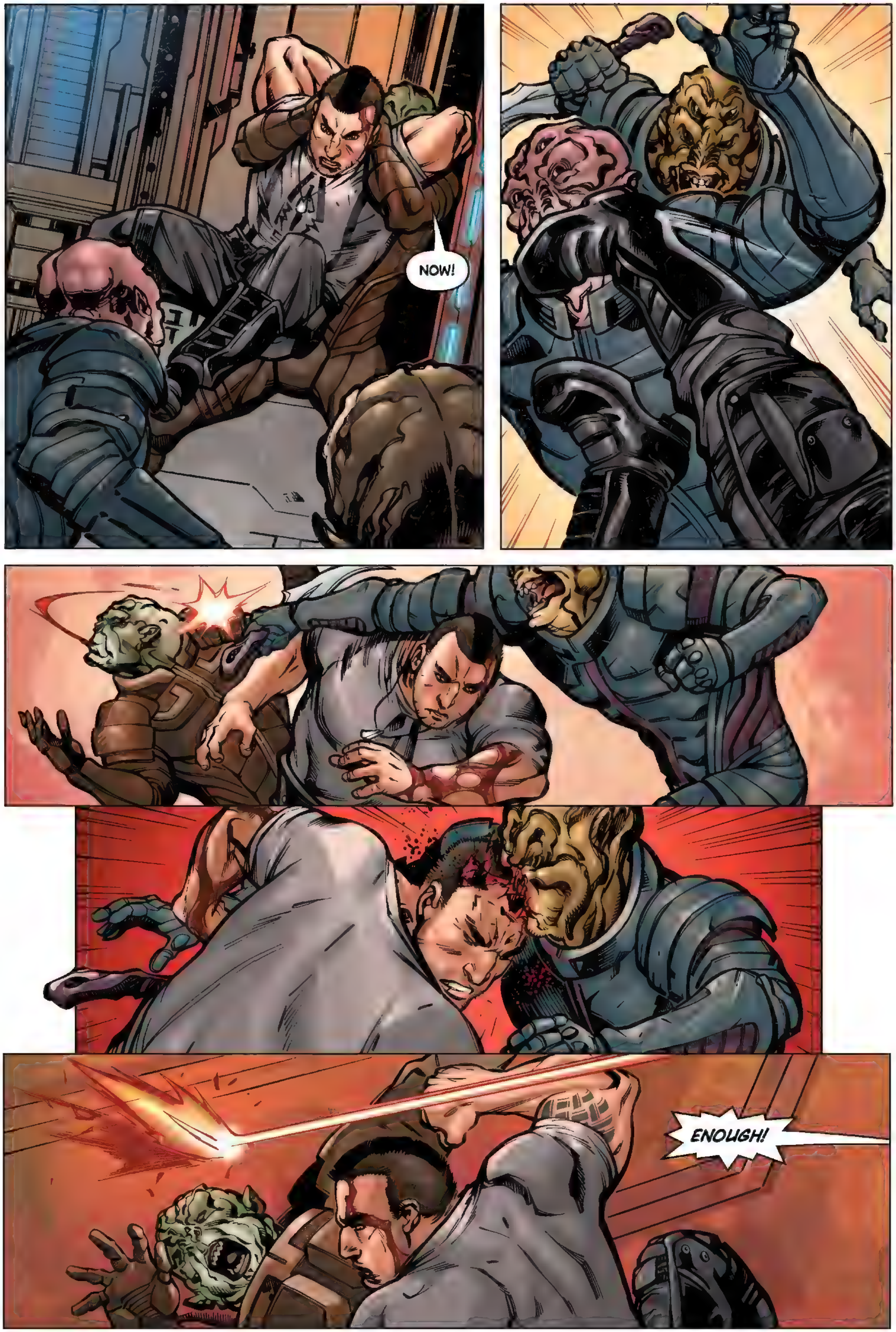

SOMEWHERE DEEP IN THE HEART OF OMEGA. DAYS AFTER THE ANNIHILATION OF A BATARIAN SYSTEM BY COMMANDER SHEPARD.
-- WHILE THE CITADEL COUNCIL SCRAMBLES TO DENOUNCE THE SO-CALLED TERRORIST ACTS ALLEGEDLY CARRIED OUT BY COMMANDER SHEPARD, BATARIAN OFFICIALS ARE DEMANDING RETRIBUTION.
COUNCILOR UDINA HAS PUBLICLY DENIED THAT THE HUMAN ALLIANCE HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE DESTRUCTION OF THE MASS RELAY...
IT'S YOUR BET, HUMAN!
-- BATARIAN LEADERS ARE CALLING FOR SHEPARD'S HEAD --
ZZSSAT!

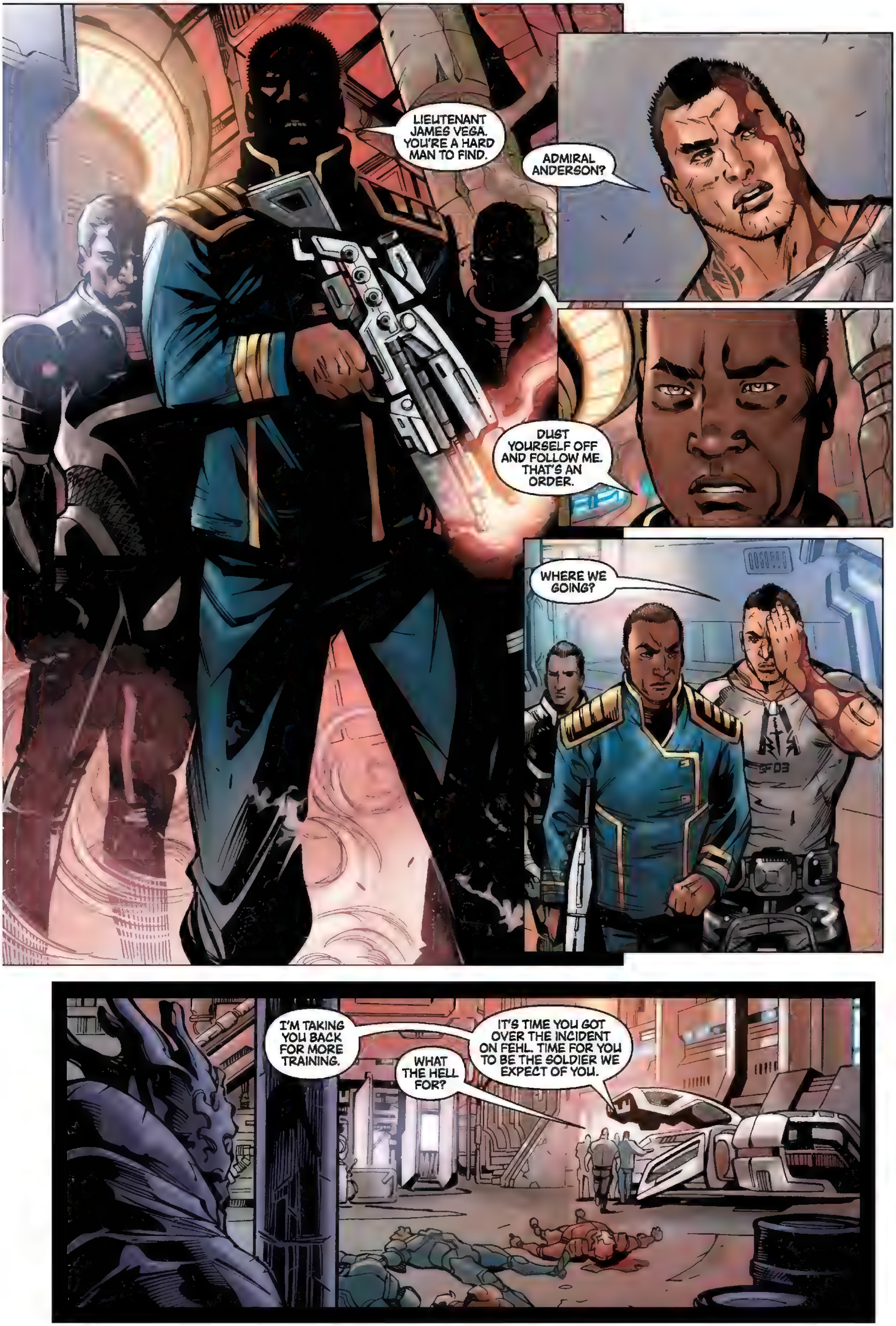

THAT'S GONNA COST YOU, KID.
SF-03
TAKE MY WINNINGS. THAT SHOULD MORE THAN COVER IT.
KEEP THE EXTRA, AS LONG AS I DON'T HAVE TO LISTEN TO THAT BULLSHIT.
YOU DON'T THINK THE BATARIANS DESERVE PAYBACK?
YEAH. YOU A SHEPARD LOVER, HUMAN?
WHY DON'T WE ALL JUST SIT DOWN AND FINISH OUR GAME.

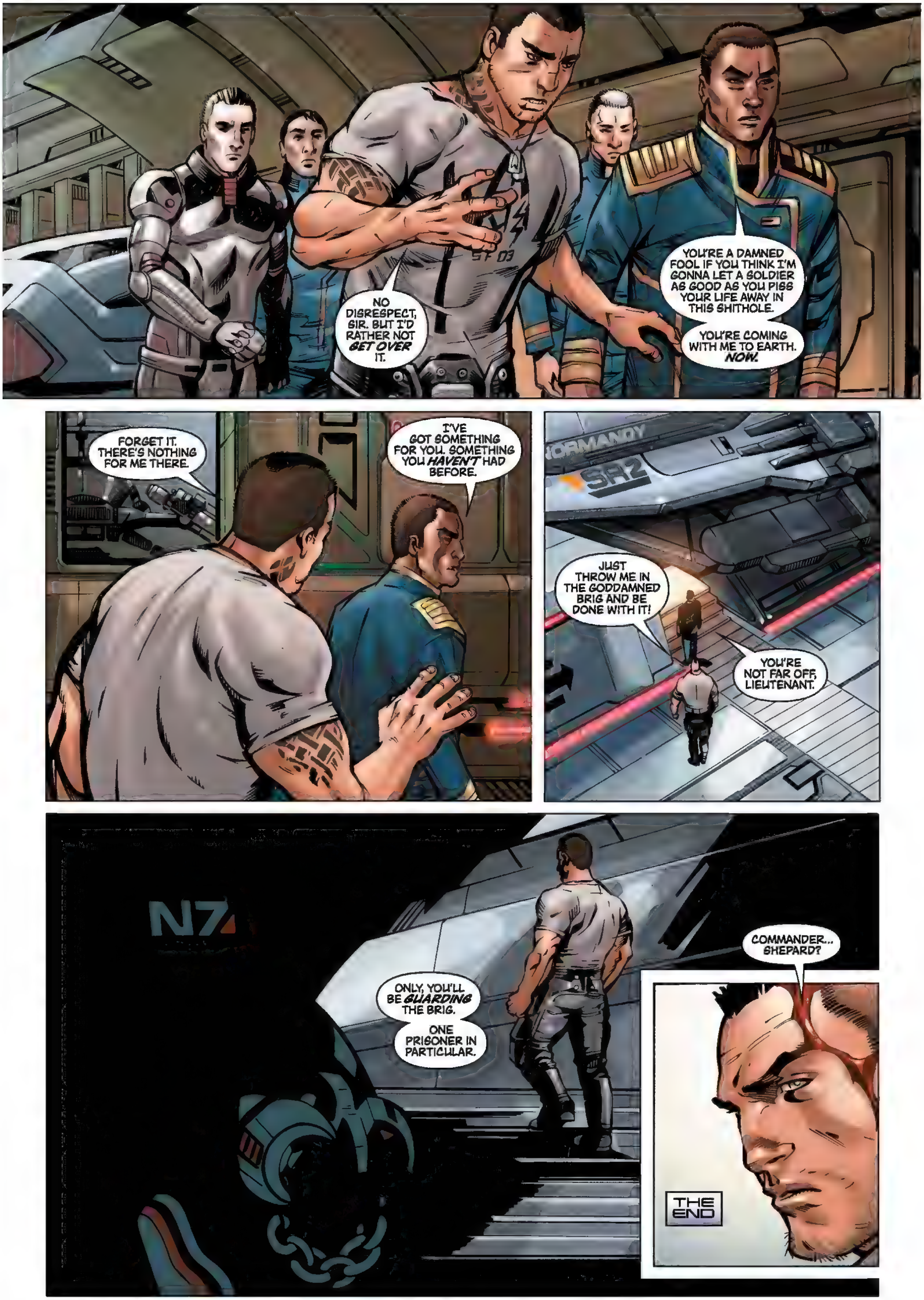

WHY DON'T YOU GO TO HELL!
ALLIANCE SCUM. YOU'RE ALL THE SAME. THINK YOU'RE SO MUCH BETTER THAN US.
WELL... BETTER LOOKING, FOR SURE.


WE'LL SEE HOW YOU LOOK AFTER WE--
YAAAH!


GET HIM!
YOU BOYS JUST DON'T KNOW WHEN TO GIVE UP...


NOW!
ENOUGH!


LIEUTENANT JAMES VEGA. YOU'RE A HARD MAN TO FIND.
ADMIRAL ANDERSON?
DUST YOURSELF OFF AND FOLLOW ME. THAT'S AN ORDER.
WHERE WE GOING?
SF03
I'M TAKING YOU BACK FOR MORE TRAINING.
WHAT THE HELL FOR?
IT'S TIME YOU GOT OVER THE INCIDENT ON FEHL. TIME FOR YOU TO BE THE SOLDIER WE EXPECT OF YOU.


NO DISRESPECT, SIR. BUT I'D RATHER NOT *GET OVER* IT.
YOU'RE A DAMNED FOOL IF YOU THINK I'M GONNA LET A SOLDIER AS GOOD AS YOU PISS YOUR LIFE AWAY IN THIS SHITHOLE.
YOU'RE COMING WITH ME TO EARTH. *NOW.*
SF 03
FORGET IT. THERE'S NOTHING FOR ME THERE.
I'VE GOT SOMETHING FOR YOU. SOMETHING YOU *HAVEN'T* HAD BEFORE.
NORMANDY
SR2
JUST THROW ME IN THE GODDAMNED BRIG AND BE DONE WITH IT!
YOU'RE NOT FAR OFF, LIEUTENANT.
N7
ONLY, YOU'LL BE *GUARDING* THE BRIG.
ONE PRISONER IN PARTICULAR.
COMMANDER... SHEPARD?
THE END

NORMANDY
SR
GARRY BROWN

Illustration by Garry Brown

HE WHO LAUGHS BEST

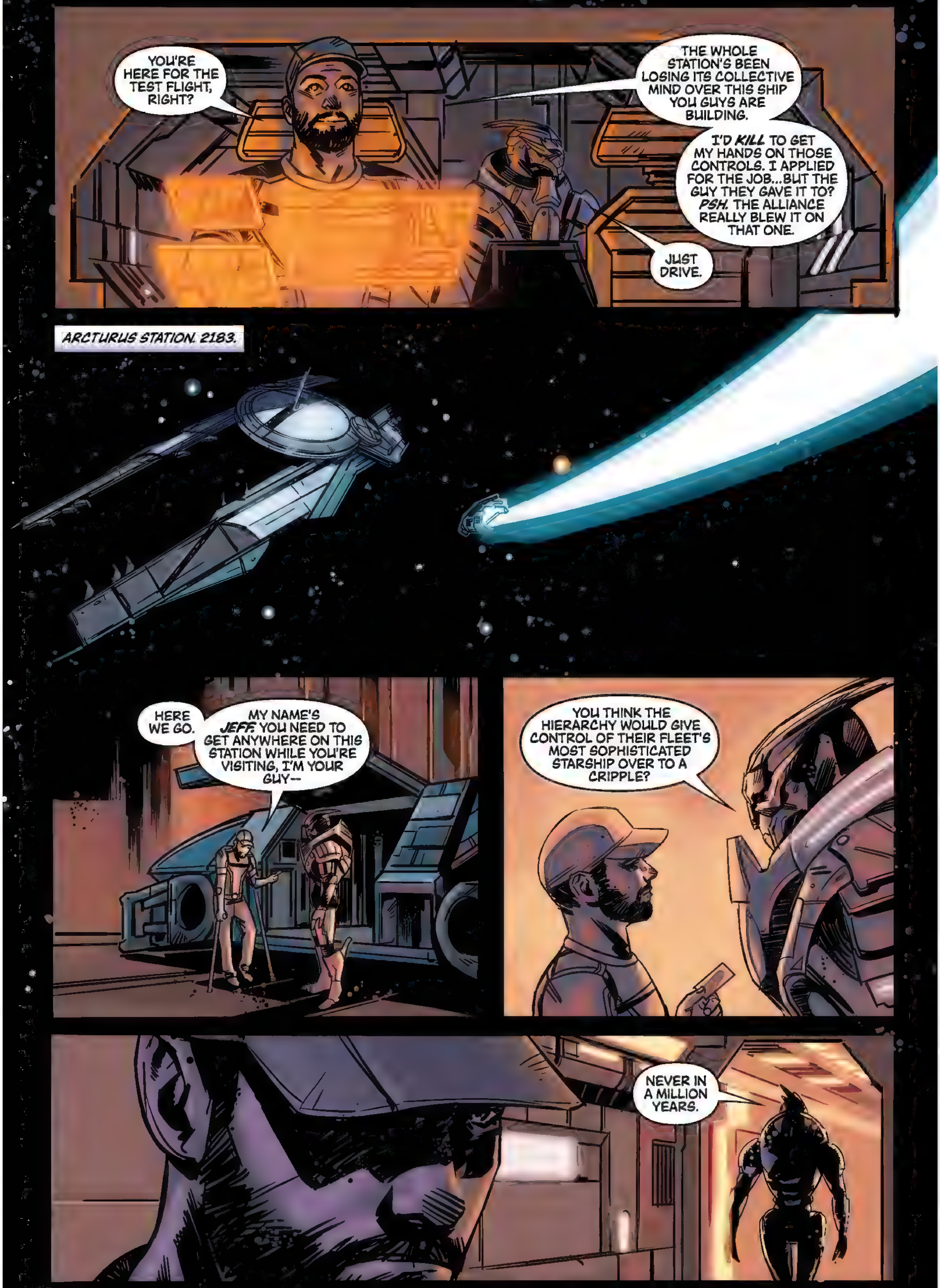
STORY
Mac Walters and Jeremy Barlow

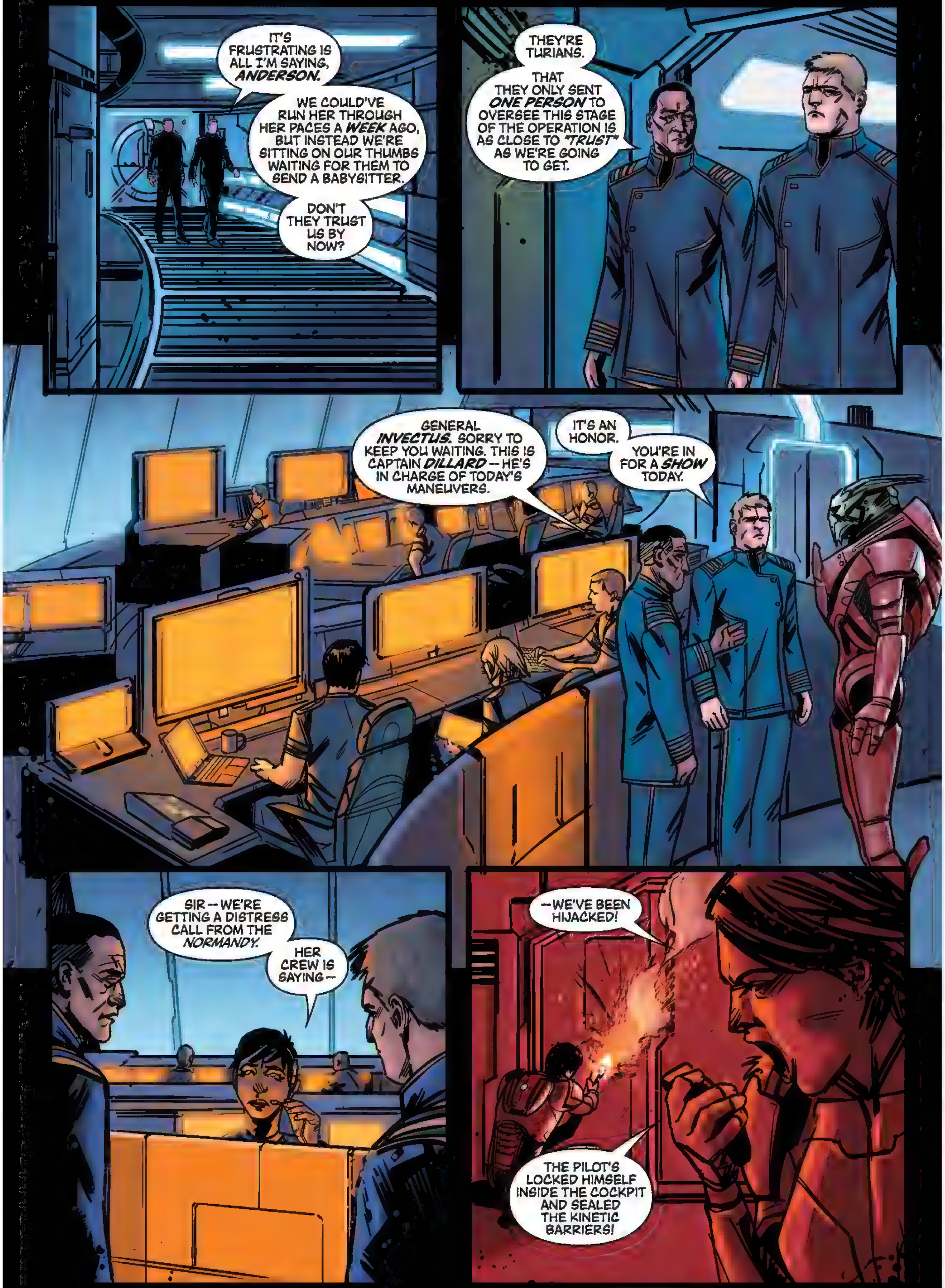
SCRIPT
Jeremy Barlow

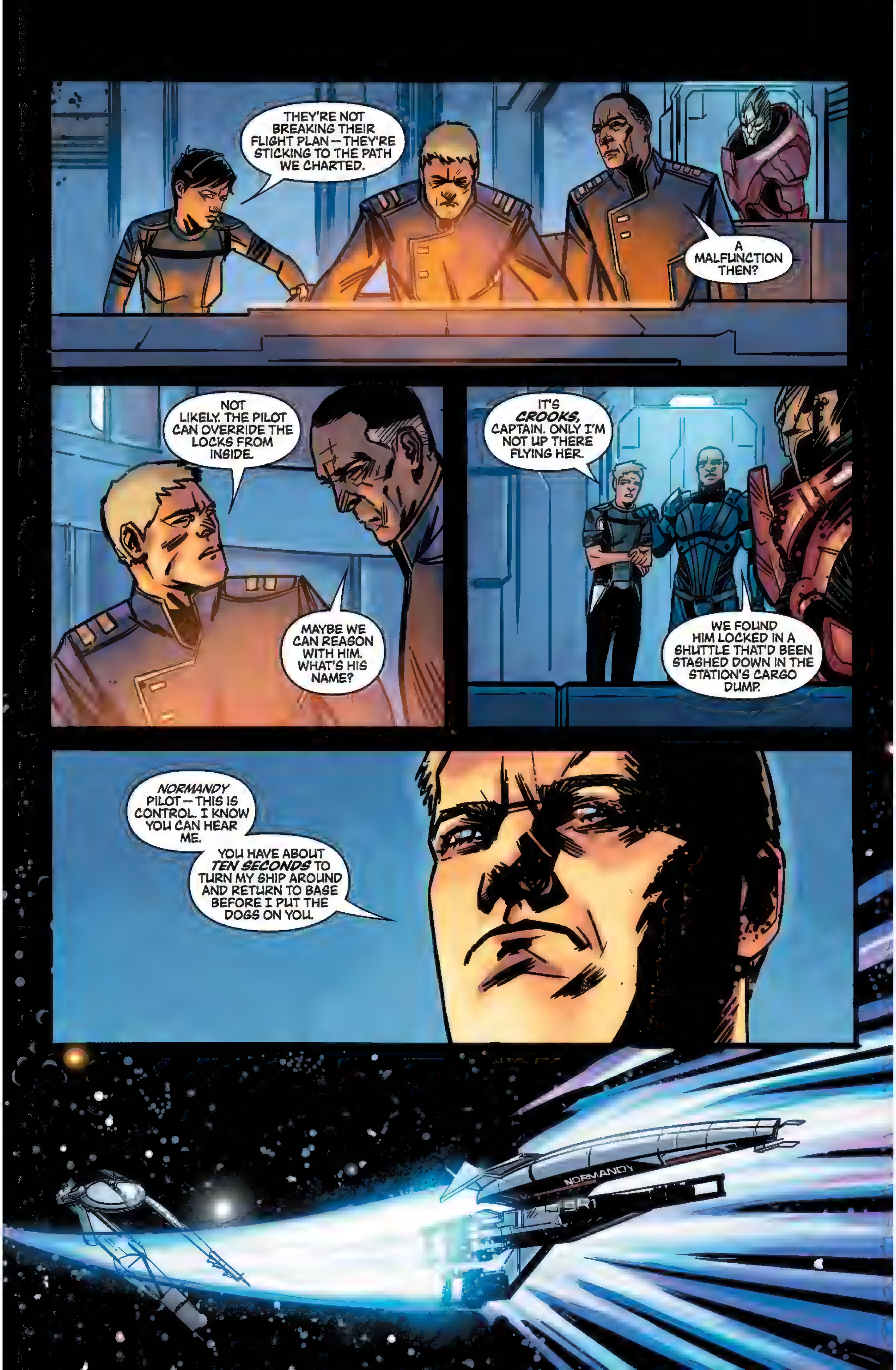
ART
Garry Brown

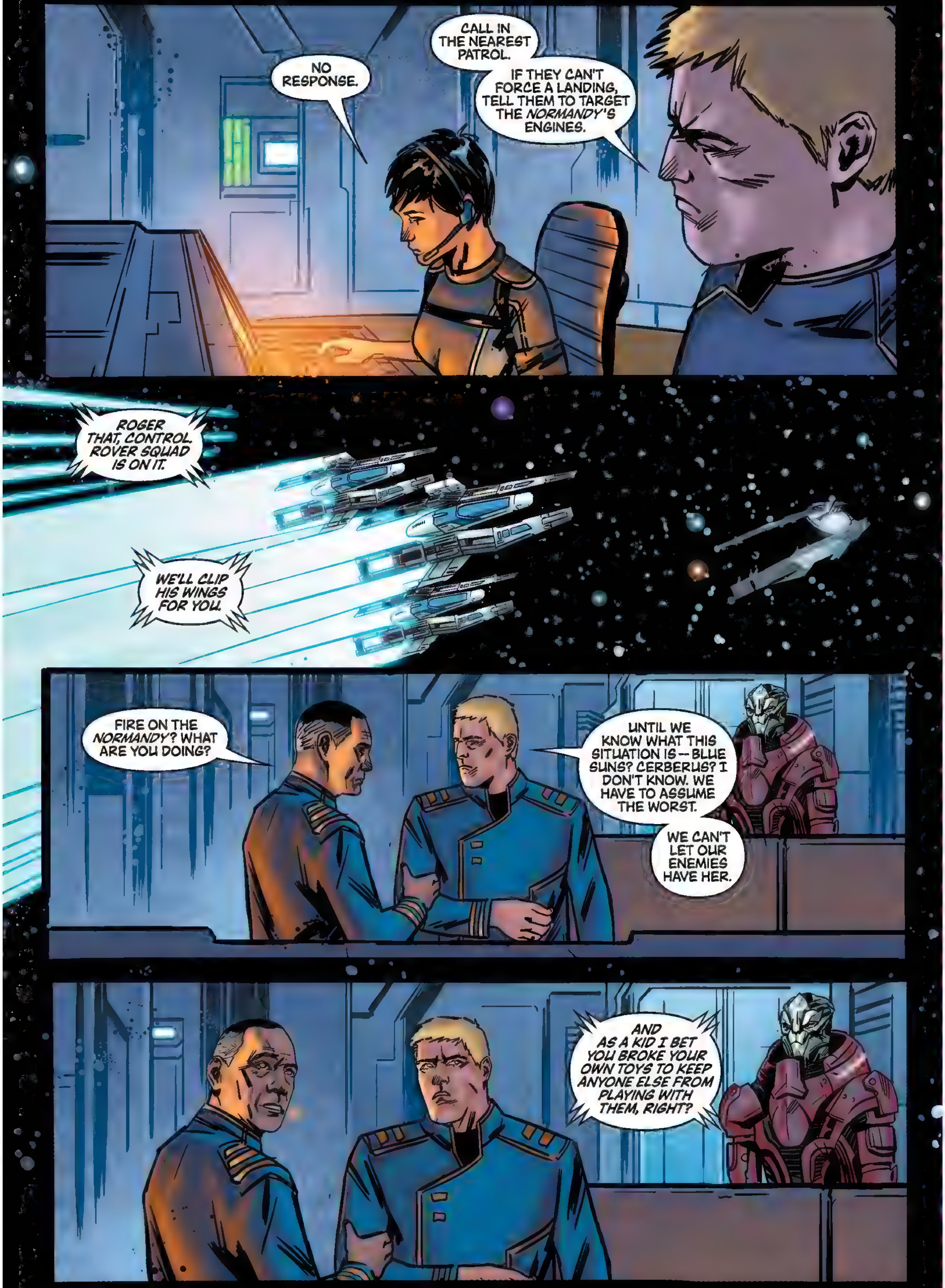
COLORS
Michael Atiyeh

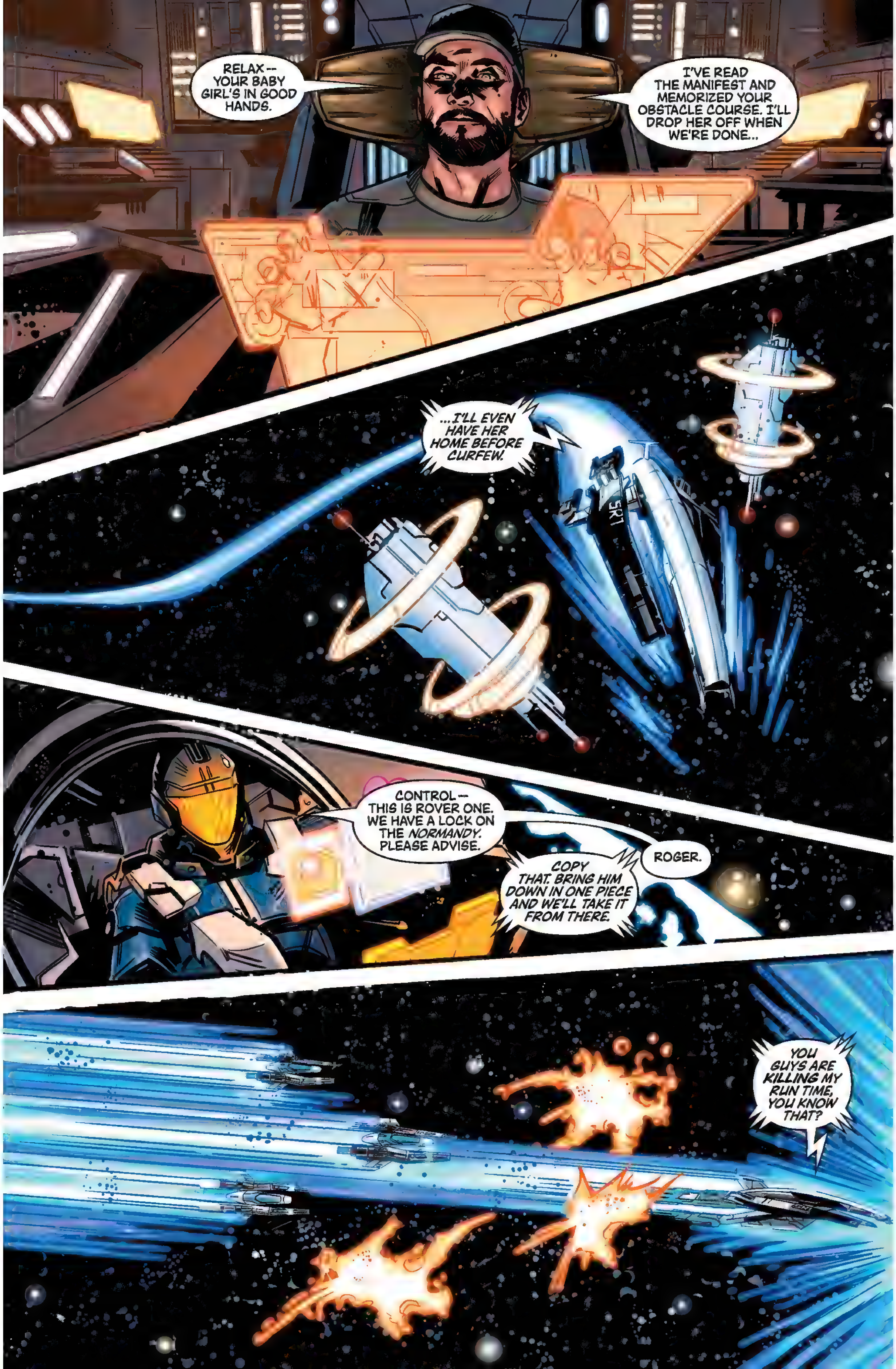
LETTERING
Michael Heisler

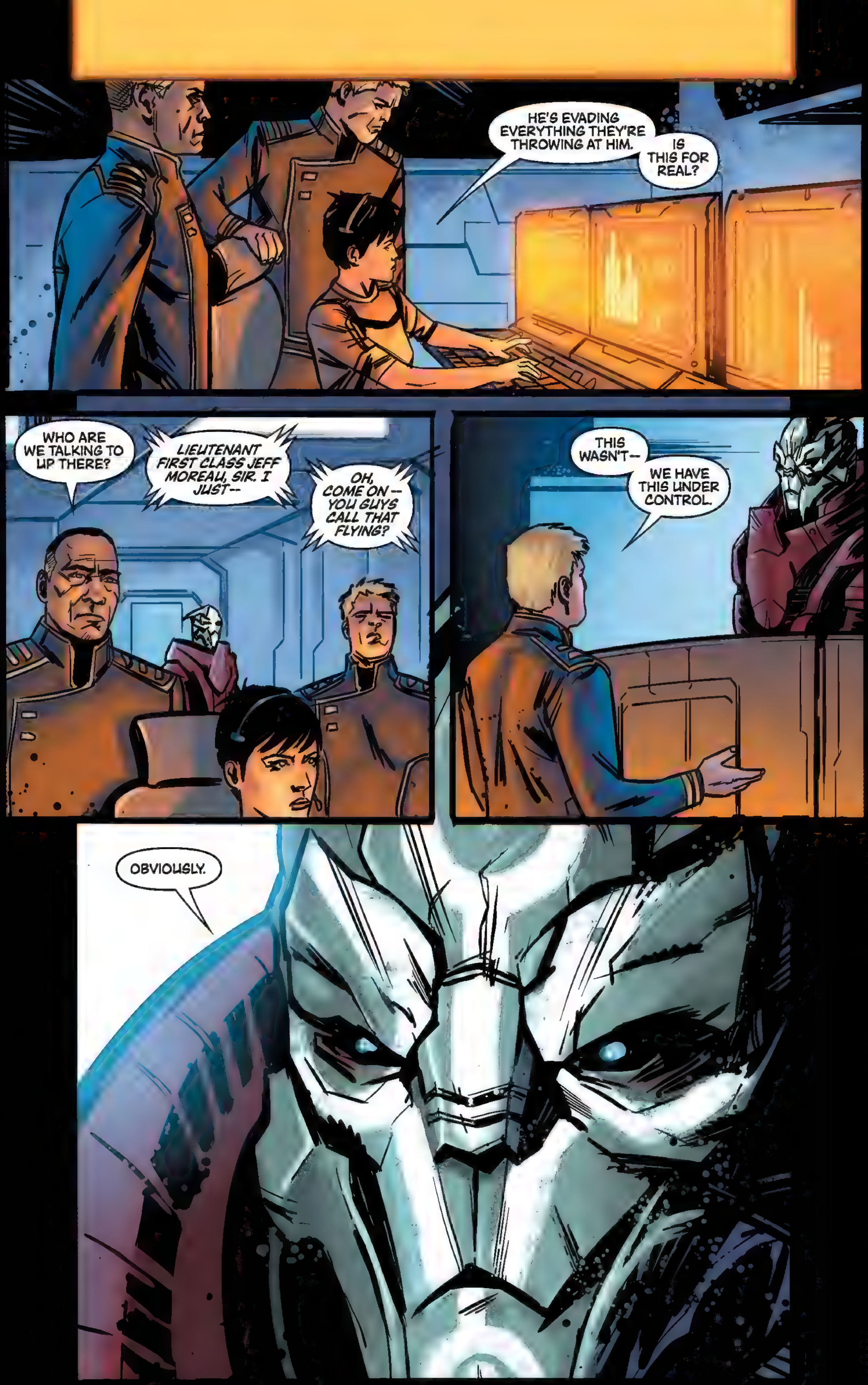

YOU'RE HERE FOR THE TEST FLIGHT, RIGHT?
THE WHOLE STATION'S BEEN LOSING ITS COLLECTIVE MIND OVER THIS SHIP YOU GUYS ARE BUILDING.
I'D *KILL* TO GET MY HANDS ON THOSE CONTROLS. I APPLIED FOR THE JOB...BUT THE GUY THEY GAVE IT TO? *PSH.* THE ALLIANCE REALLY BLEW IT ON THAT ONE.
JUST DRIVE.
ARCTURUS STATION. 2183.
HERE WE GO.
MY NAME'S *JEFF.* YOU NEED TO GET ANYWHERE ON THIS STATION WHILE YOU'RE VISITING, I'M YOUR GUY--
YOU THINK THE HIERARCHY WOULD GIVE CONTROL OF THEIR FLEET'S MOST SOPHISTICATED STARSHIP OVER TO A CRIPPLE?
NEVER IN A MILLION YEARS.

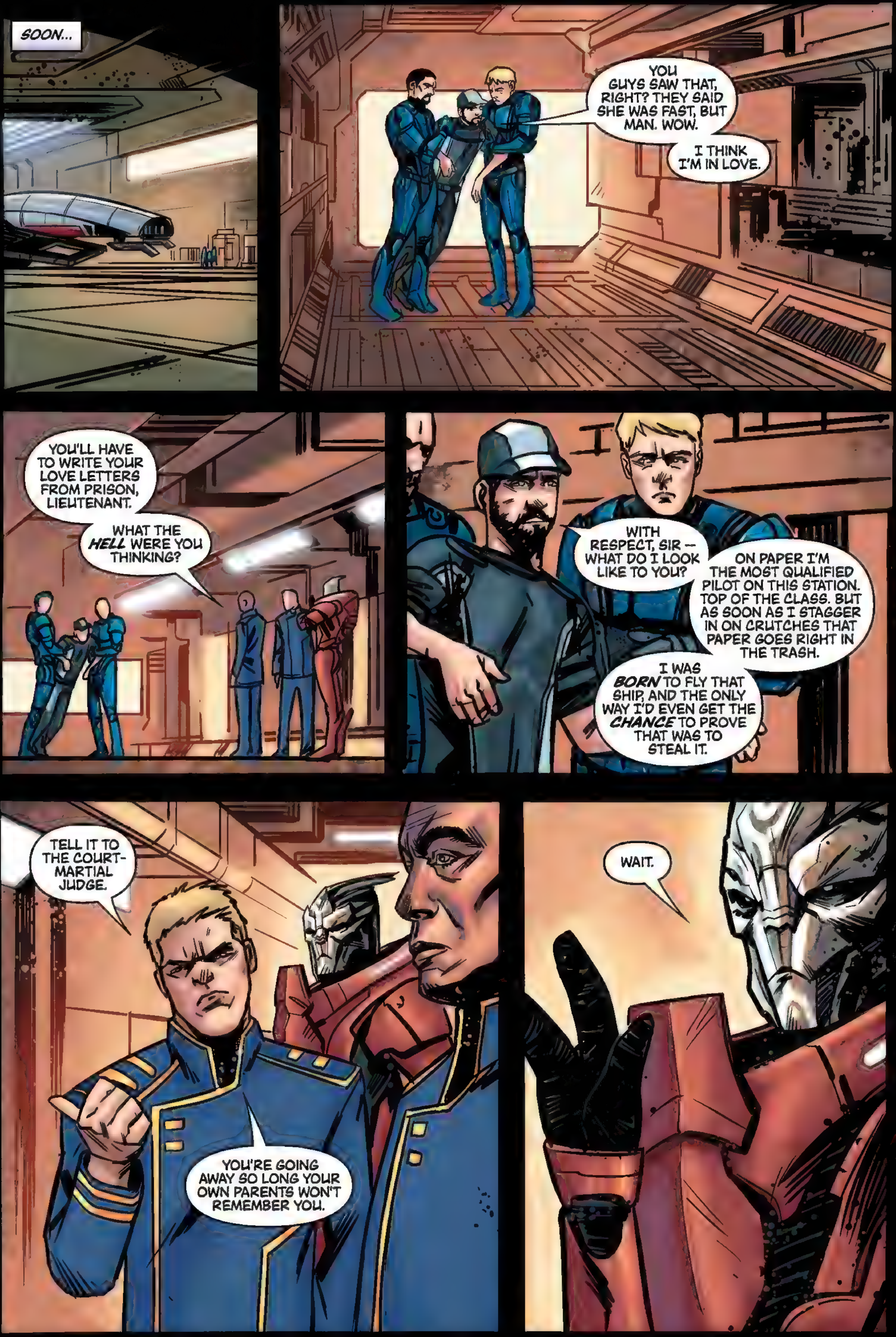

IT'S FRUSTRATING IS ALL I'M SAYING, ANDERSON.
WE COULD'VE RUN HER THROUGH HER PACES A WEEK AGO, BUT INSTEAD WE'RE SITTING ON OUR THUMBS WAITING FOR THEM TO SEND A BABYSITTER.
DON'T THEY TRUST US BY NOW?
THEY'RE TURIANS.
THAT THEY ONLY SENT ONE PERSON TO OVERSEE THIS STAGE OF THE OPERATION IS AS CLOSE TO "TRUST" AS WE'RE GOING TO GET.
GENERAL INVECTUS. SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING. THIS IS CAPTAIN DILLARD -- HE'S IN CHARGE OF TODAY'S MANEUVERS.
IT'S AN HONOR.
YOU'RE IN FOR A SHOW TODAY.
SIR -- WE'RE GETTING A DISTRESS CALL FROM THE NORMANDY.
HER CREW IS SAYING --
-- WE'VE BEEN HIJACKED!
THE PILOT'S LOCKED HIMSELF INSIDE THE COCKPIT AND SEALED THE KINETIC BARRIERS!


THEY'RE NOT BREAKING THEIR FLIGHT PLAN -- THEY'RE STICKING TO THE PATH WE CHARTED.
A MALFUNCTION THEN?
NOT LIKELY. THE PILOT CAN OVERRIDE THE LOCKS FROM INSIDE.
MAYBE WE CAN REASON WITH HIM. WHAT'S HIS NAME?
IT'S *CROOKS,* CAPTAIN. ONLY I'M NOT UP THERE FLYING HER.
WE FOUND HIM LOCKED IN A SHUTTLE THAT'D BEEN STASHED DOWN IN THE STATION'S CARGO DUMP.
NORMANDY PILOT -- THIS IS CONTROL. I KNOW YOU CAN HEAR ME.
YOU HAVE ABOUT *TEN SECONDS* TO TURN MY SHIP AROUND AND RETURN TO BASE BEFORE I PUT THE DOGS ON YOU.
NORMANDY
SR1


NO RESPONSE.
CALL IN THE NEAREST PATROL.
IF THEY CAN'T FORCE A LANDING, TELL THEM TO TARGET THE *NORMANDY'S* ENGINES.
ROGER THAT, CONTROL. ROVER SQUAD IS ON IT.
WE'LL CLIP HIS WINGS FOR YOU.
FIRE ON THE *NORMANDY*? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
UNTIL WE KNOW WHAT THIS SITUATION IS -- BLUE SUNS? CERBERUS? I DON'T KNOW. WE HAVE TO ASSUME THE WORST.
WE CAN'T LET OUR ENEMIES HAVE HER.
AND AS A KID I BET YOU BROKE YOUR OWN TOYS TO KEEP ANYONE ELSE FROM PLAYING WITH THEM, RIGHT?


RELAX -- YOUR BABY GIRL'S IN GOOD HANDS.
I'VE READ THE MANIFEST AND MEMORIZED YOUR OBSTACLE COURSE. I'LL DROP HER OFF WHEN WE'RE DONE...
...I'LL EVEN HAVE HER HOME BEFORE CURFEW.
SR1
CONTROL -- THIS IS ROVER ONE. WE HAVE A LOCK ON THE *NORMANDY*. PLEASE ADVISE.
ROGER.
COPY THAT. BRING HIM DOWN IN ONE PIECE AND WE'LL TAKE IT FROM THERE.
YOU GUYS ARE KILLING MY RUN TIME, YOU KNOW THAT?


HE'S EVADING EVERYTHING THEY'RE THROWING AT HIM.
IS THIS FOR REAL?
WHO ARE WE TALKING TO UP THERE?
LIEUTENANT FIRST CLASS JEFF MOREAU, SIR. I JUST--
OH, COME ON-- YOU GUYS CALL THAT FLYING?
THIS WASN'T--
WE HAVE THIS UNDER CONTROL.
OBVIOUSLY.


SOON...
YOU GUYS SAW THAT, RIGHT? THEY SAID SHE WAS FAST, BUT MAN. WOW.
I THINK I'M IN LOVE.
YOU'LL HAVE TO WRITE YOUR LOVE LETTERS FROM PRISON, LIEUTENANT.
WHAT THE *HELL* WERE YOU THINKING?
WITH RESPECT, SIR -- WHAT DO I LOOK LIKE TO YOU?
ON PAPER I'M THE MOST QUALIFIED PILOT ON THIS STATION. TOP OF THE CLASS. BUT AS SOON AS I STAGGER IN ON CRUTCHES THAT PAPER GOES RIGHT IN THE TRASH.
I WAS *BORN* TO FLY THAT SHIP, AND THE ONLY WAY I'D EVEN GET THE *CHANCE* TO PROVE THAT WAS TO STEAL IT.
TELL IT TO THE COURT-MARTIAL JUDGE.
YOU'RE GOING AWAY SO LONG YOUR OWN PARENTS WON'T REMEMBER YOU.
WAIT.

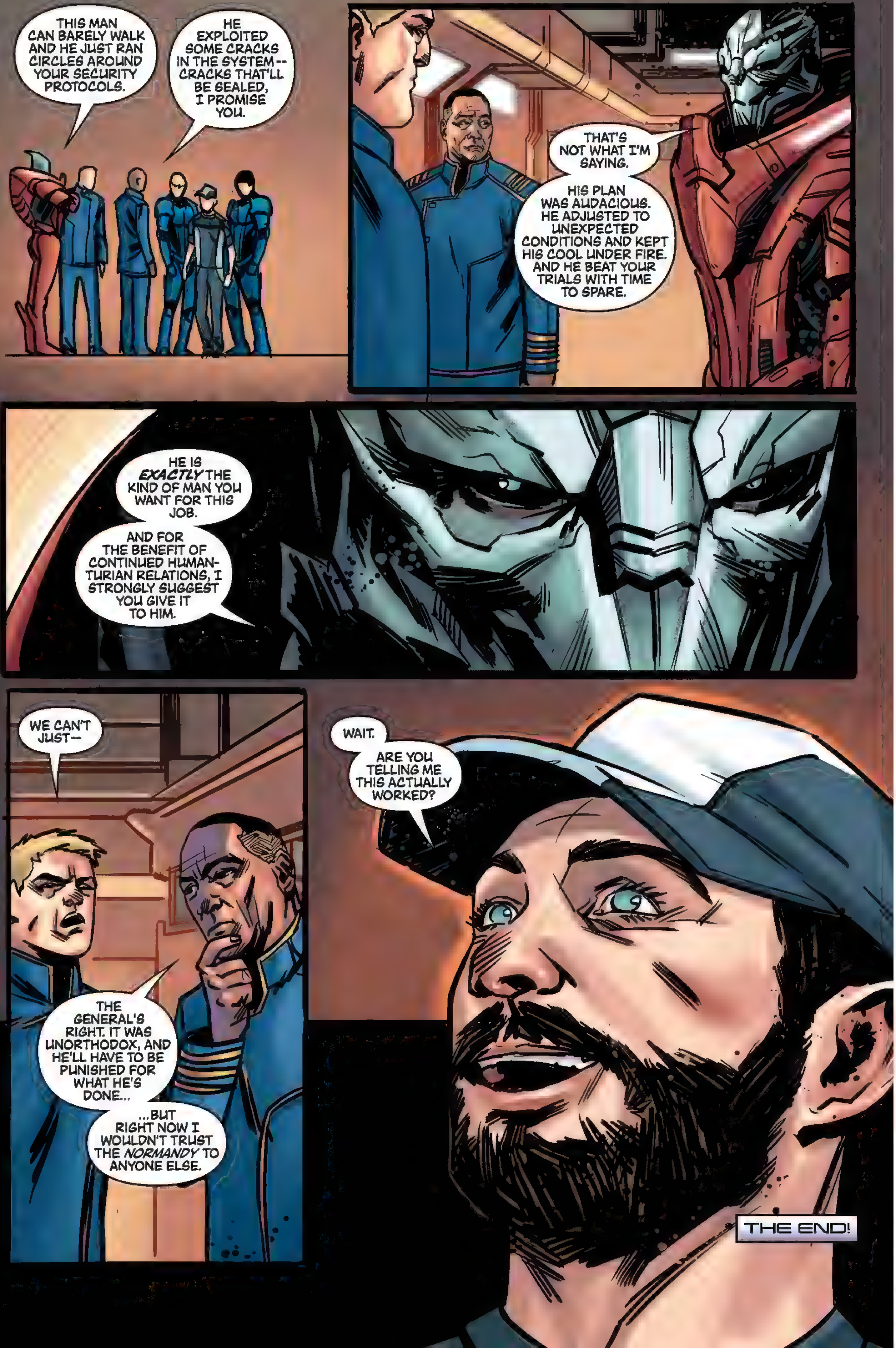

THIS MAN CAN BARELY WALK AND HE JUST RAN CIRCLES AROUND YOUR SECURITY PROTOCOLS.
HE EXPLOITED SOME CRACKS IN THE SYSTEM -- CRACKS THAT'LL BE SEALED, I PROMISE YOU.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M SAYING.
HIS PLAN WAS AUDACIOUS. HE ADJUSTED TO UNEXPECTED CONDITIONS AND KEPT HIS COOL UNDER FIRE. AND HE BEAT YOUR TRIALS WITH TIME TO SPARE.
HE IS *EXACTLY* THE KIND OF MAN YOU WANT FOR THIS JOB.
AND FOR THE BENEFIT OF CONTINUED HUMAN-TURIAN RELATIONS, I STRONGLY SUGGEST YOU GIVE IT TO HIM.
WE CAN'T JUST--
THE GENERAL'S RIGHT. IT WAS UNORTHODOX, AND HE'LL HAVE TO BE PUNISHED FOR WHAT HE'S DONE...
...BUT RIGHT NOW I WOULDN'T TRUST THE *NORMANDY* TO ANYONE ELSE.
WAIT.
ARE YOU TELLING ME THIS ACTUALLY WORKED?
THE END!

Illustration by Omar Francia

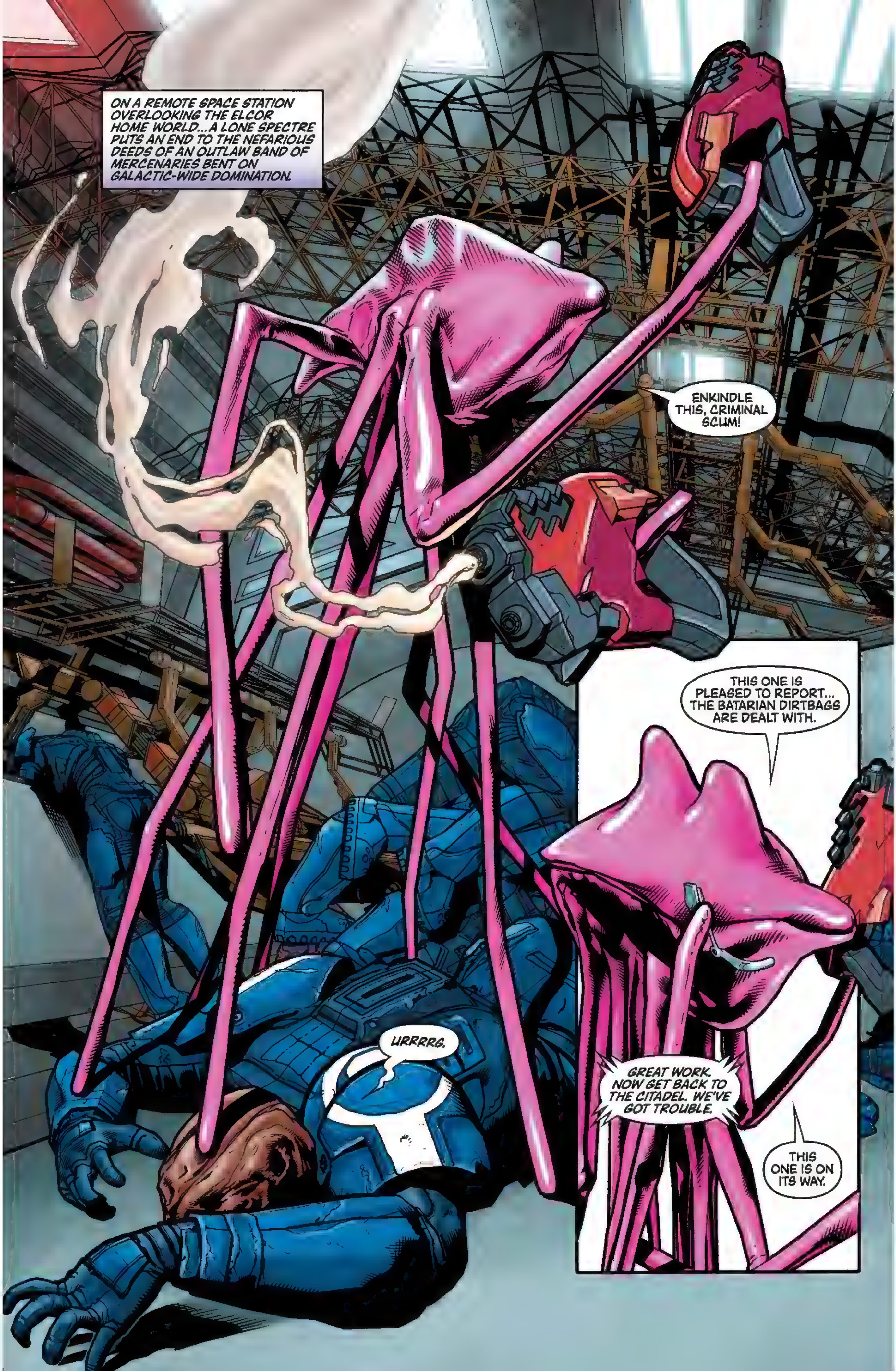
BLASTO: ETERNITY IS FOREVER

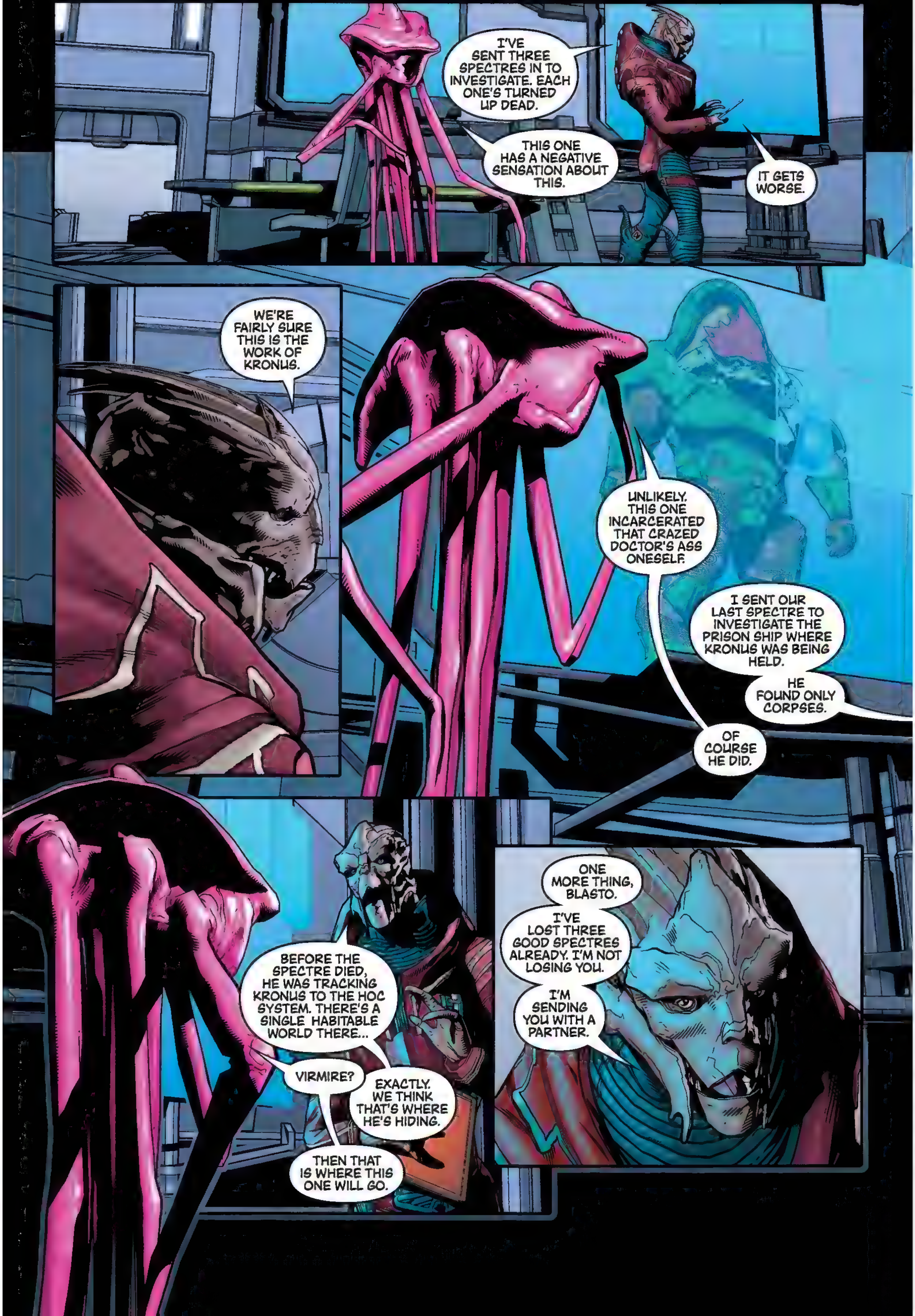
STORY
Mac Walters

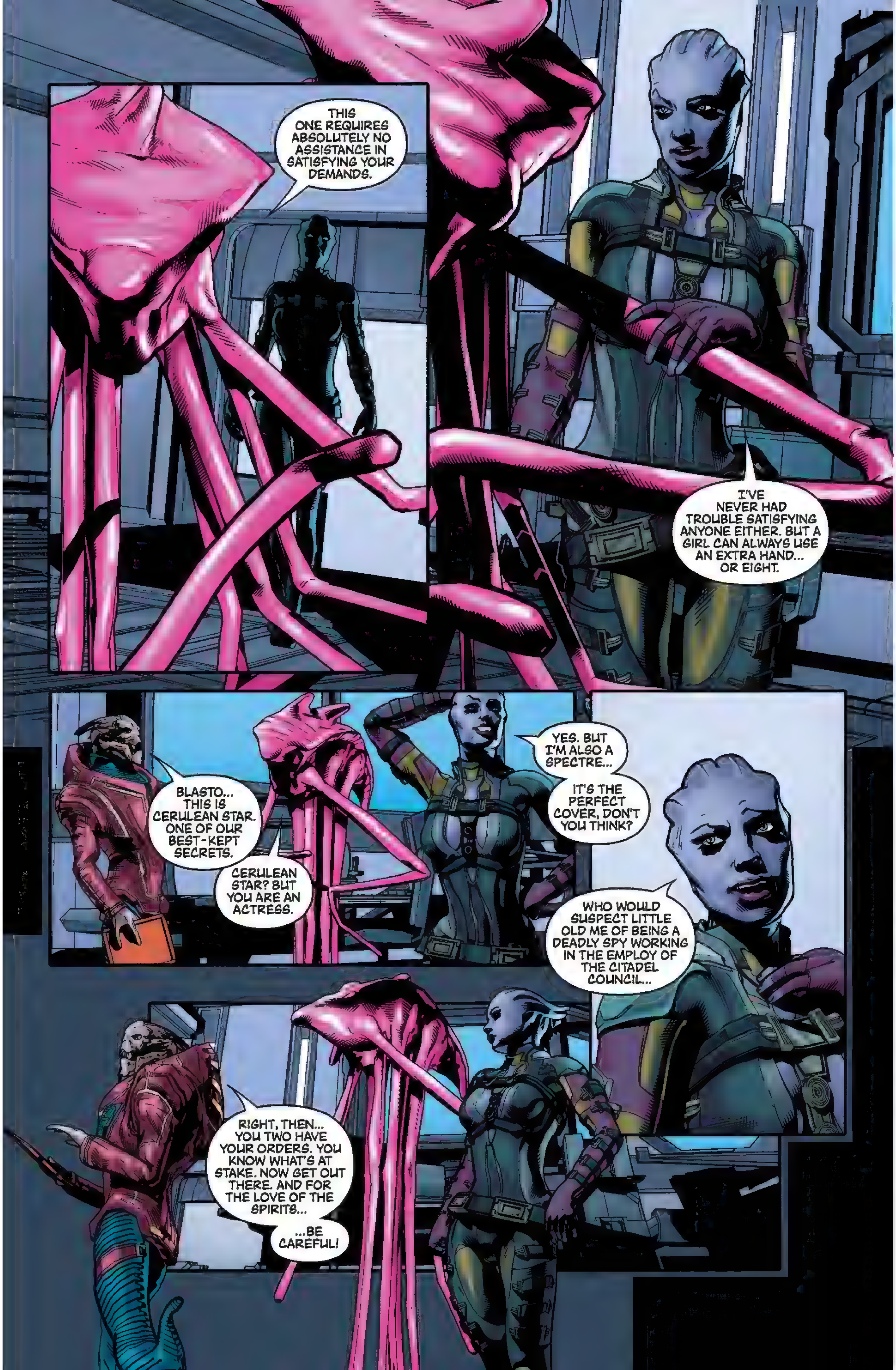
ART
Omar Francia

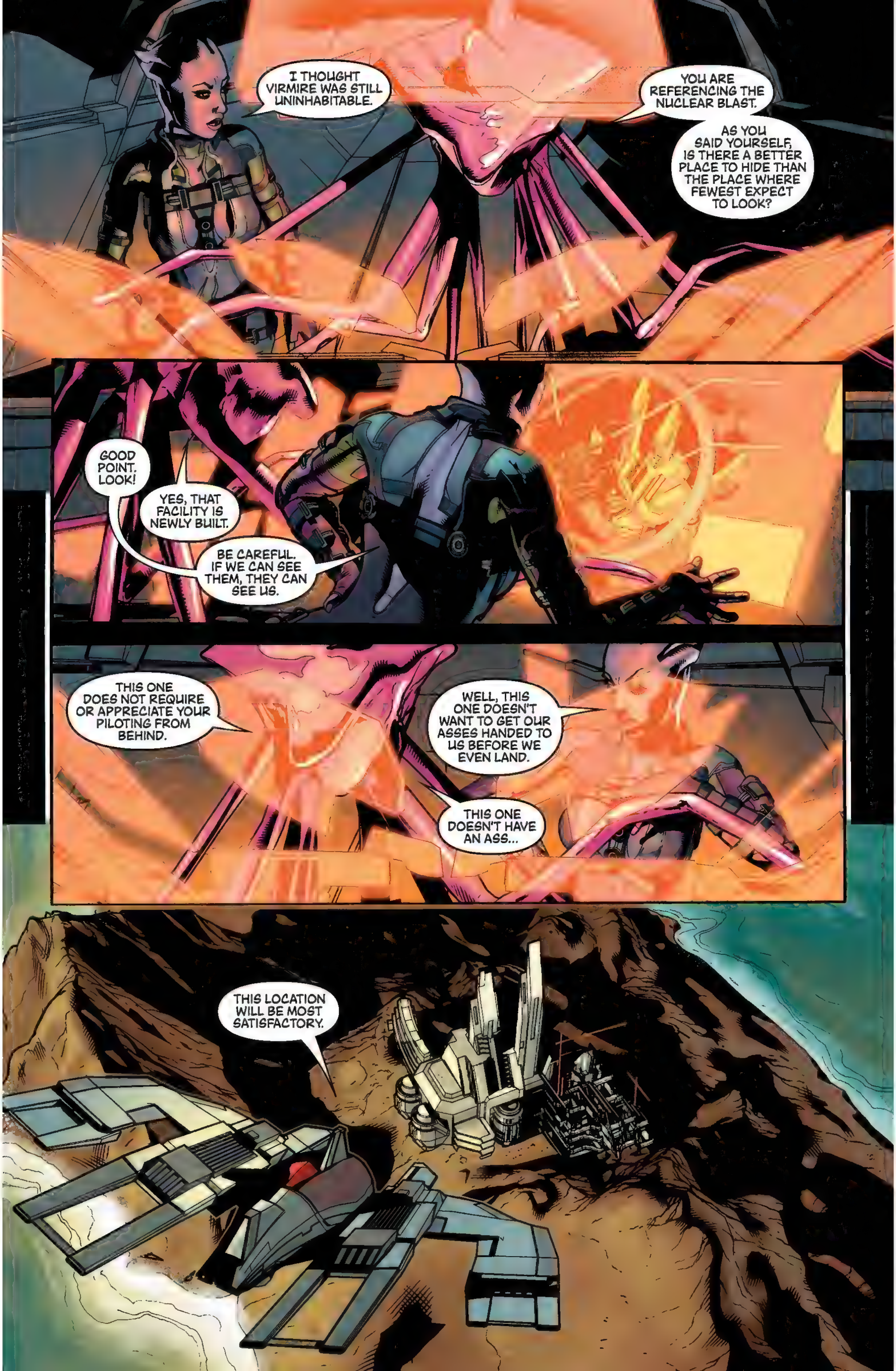
COLORS
Michael Atiyeh

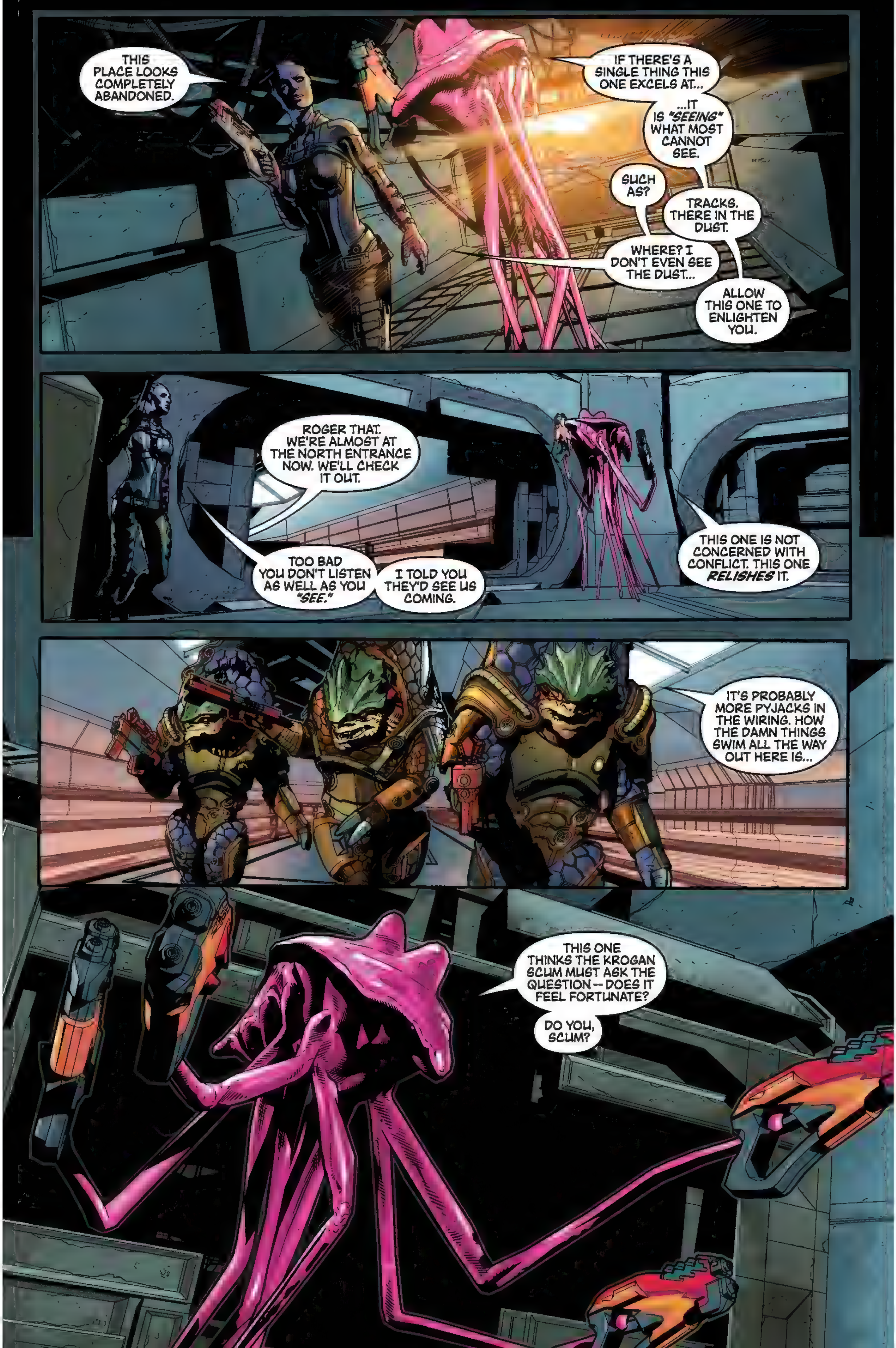
LETTERING
Michael Heisler

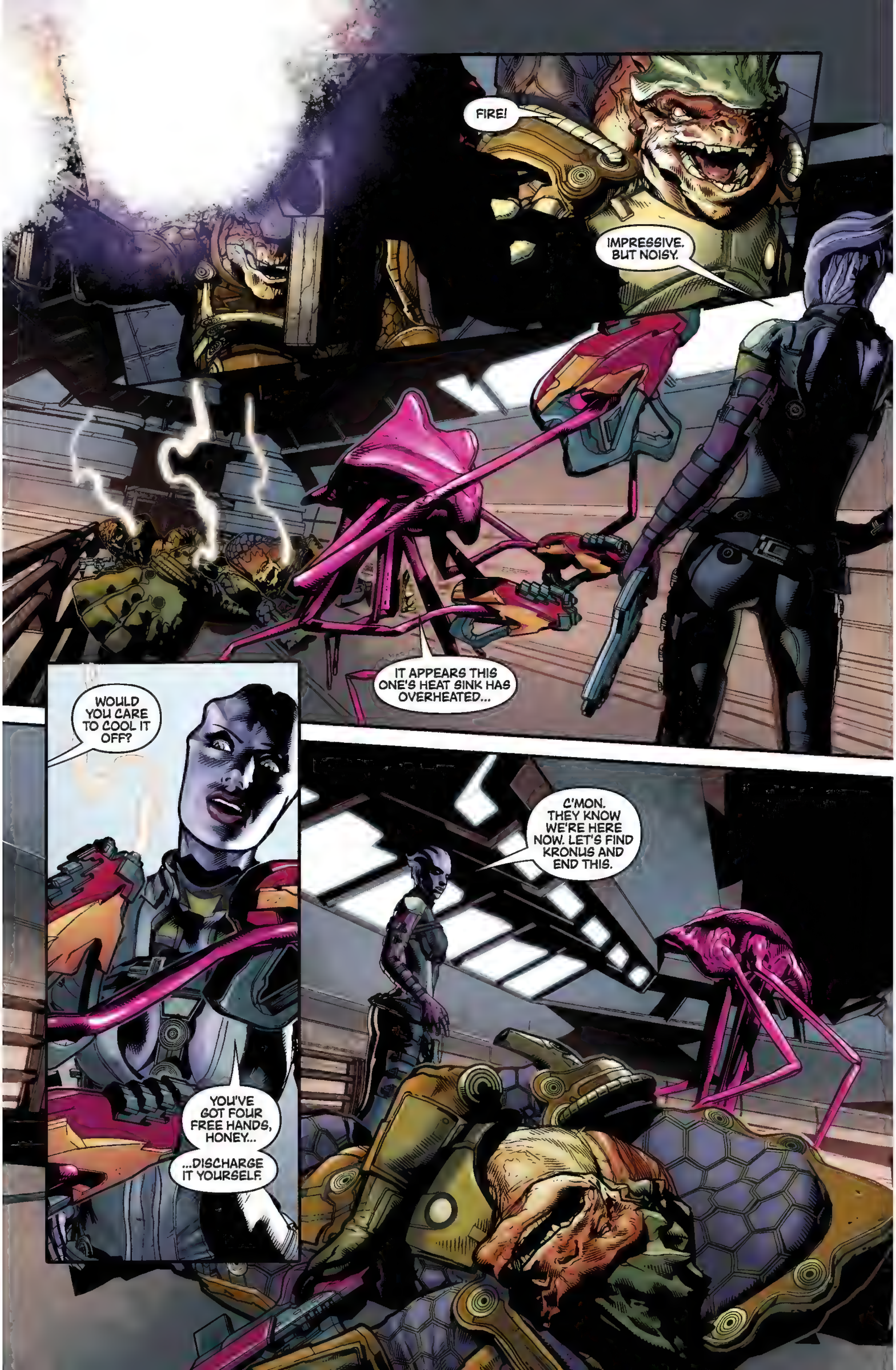

ON A REMOTE SPACE STATION OVERLOOKING THE ELCOR HOME WORLD...A LONE SPECTRE PUTS AN END TO THE NEFARIOUS DEEDS OF AN OUTLAW BAND OF MERCENARIES BENT ON GALACTIC-WIDE DOMINATION.
ENKINDLE THIS, CRIMINAL SCUM!
THIS ONE IS PLEASED TO REPORT... THE BATARIAN DIRTBAGS ARE DEALT WITH.
URRRRG.
GREAT WORK. NOW GET BACK TO THE CITADEL. WE'VE GOT TROUBLE.
THIS ONE IS ON ITS WAY.

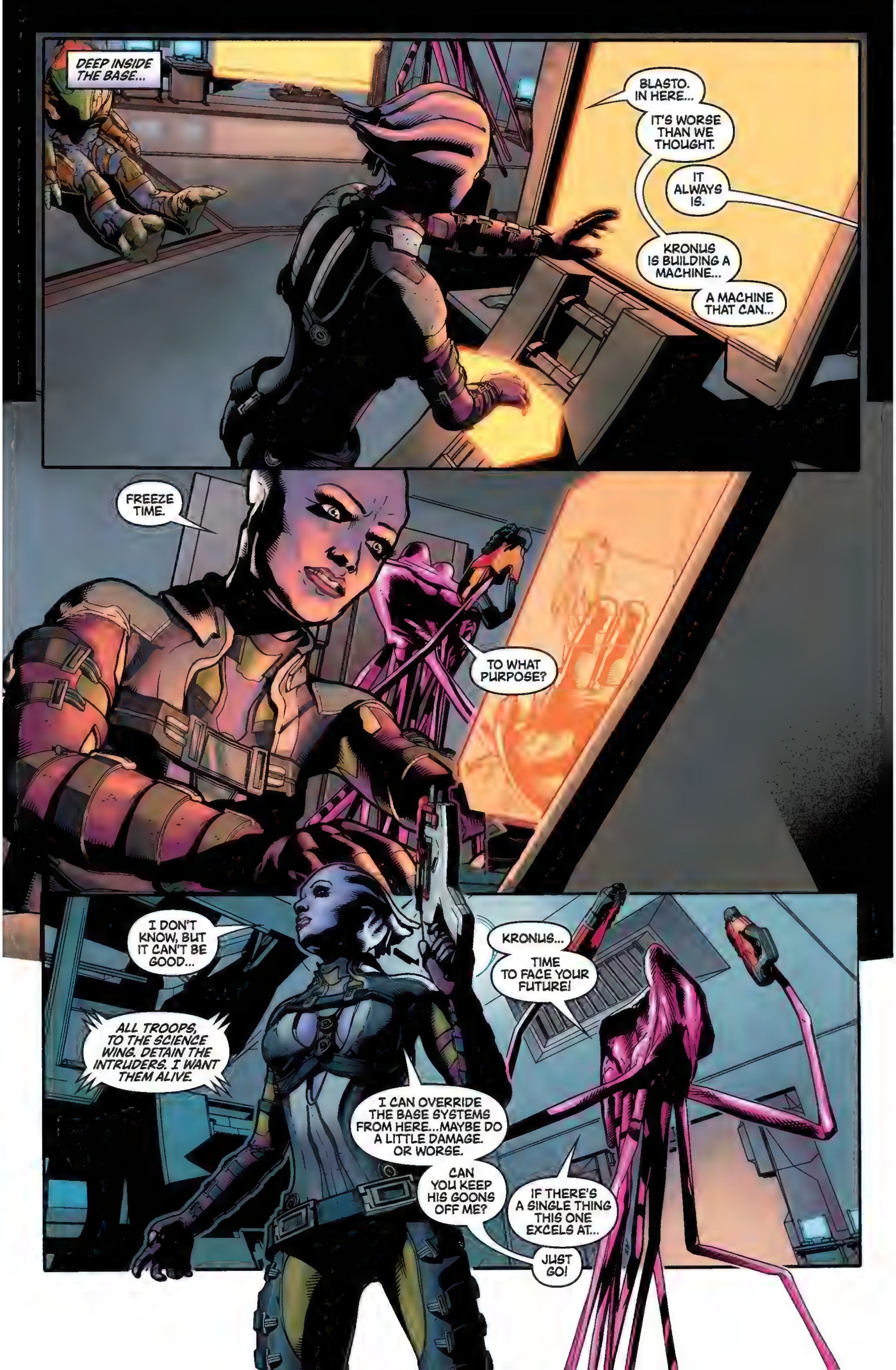

I'VE SENT THREE SPECTRES IN TO INVESTIGATE. EACH ONE'S TURNED UP DEAD.
THIS ONE HAS A NEGATIVE SENSATION ABOUT THIS.
IT GETS WORSE.
WE'RE FAIRLY SURE THIS IS THE WORK OF KRONUS.
UNLIKELY. THIS ONE INCARCERATED THAT CRAZED DOCTOR'S ASS ONESELF.
I SENT OUR LAST SPECTRE TO INVESTIGATE THE PRISON SHIP WHERE KRONUS WAS BEING HELD.
HE FOUND ONLY CORPSES.
OF COURSE HE DID.
BEFORE THE SPECTRE DIED, HE WAS TRACKING KRONUS TO THE HOC SYSTEM. THERE'S A SINGLE HABITABLE WORLD THERE...
VIRMIRE?
EXACTLY. WE THINK THAT'S WHERE HE'S HIDING.
THEN THAT IS WHERE THIS ONE WILL GO.
ONE MORE THING, BLASTO.
I'VE LOST THREE GOOD SPECTRES ALREADY. I'M NOT LOSING YOU.
I'M SENDING YOU WITH A PARTNER.

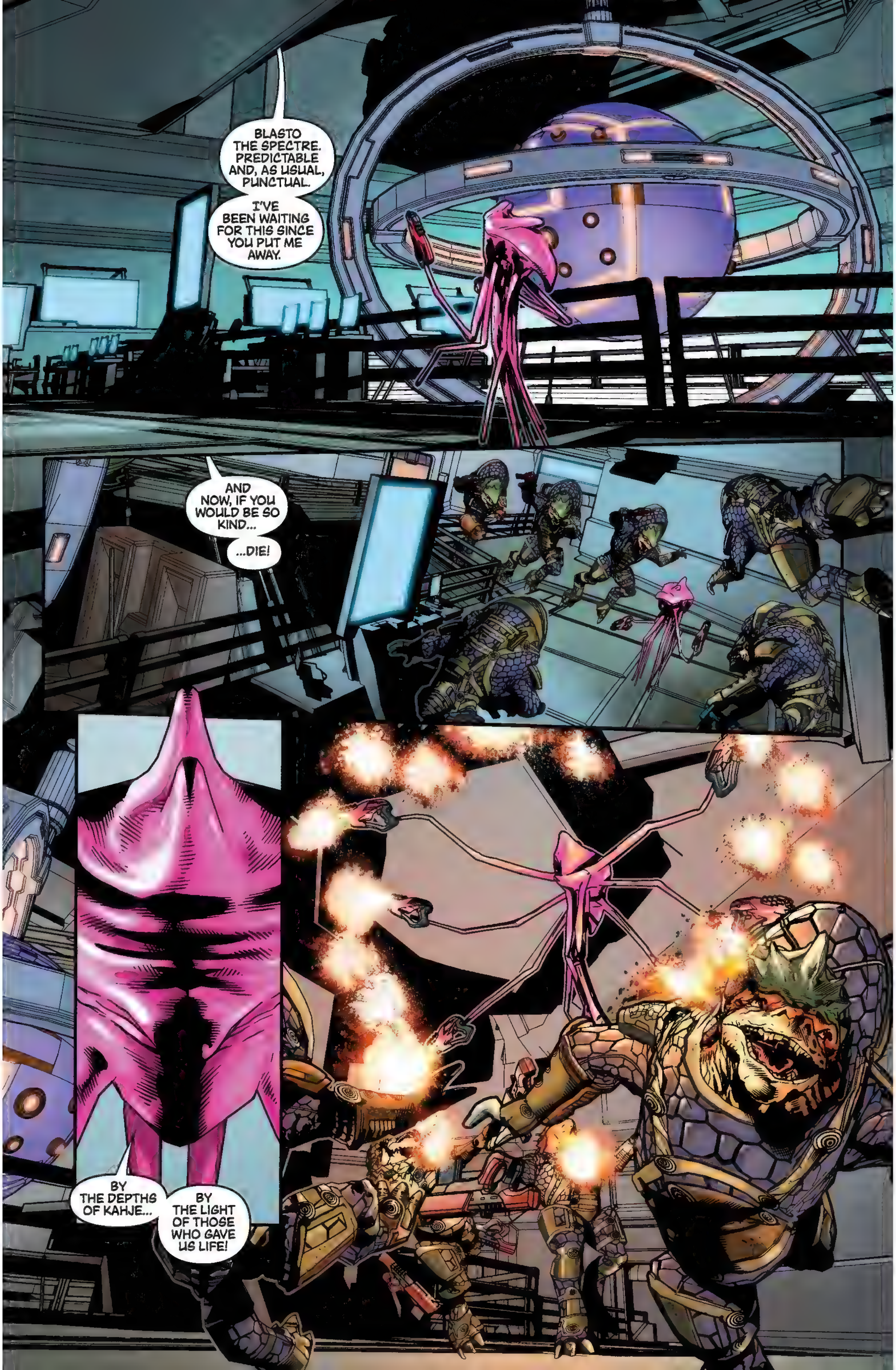

THIS ONE REQUIRES ABSOLUTELY NO ASSISTANCE IN SATISFYING YOUR DEMANDS.
I'VE NEVER HAD TROUBLE SATISFYING ANYONE EITHER. BUT A GIRL CAN ALWAYS USE AN EXTRA HAND... OR EIGHT.
BLASTO... THIS IS CERULEAN STAR. ONE OF OUR BEST-KEPT SECRETS.
CERULEAN STAR? BUT YOU ARE AN ACTRESS.
YES. BUT I'M ALSO A SPECTRE...
IT'S THE PERFECT COVER, DON'T YOU THINK?
WHO WOULD SUSPECT LITTLE OLD ME OF BEING A DEADLY SPY WORKING IN THE EMPLOY OF THE CITADEL COUNCIL...
RIGHT, THEN... YOU TWO HAVE YOUR ORDERS. YOU KNOW WHAT'S AT STAKE. NOW GET OUT THERE. AND FOR THE LOVE OF THE SPIRITS...
...BE CAREFUL!

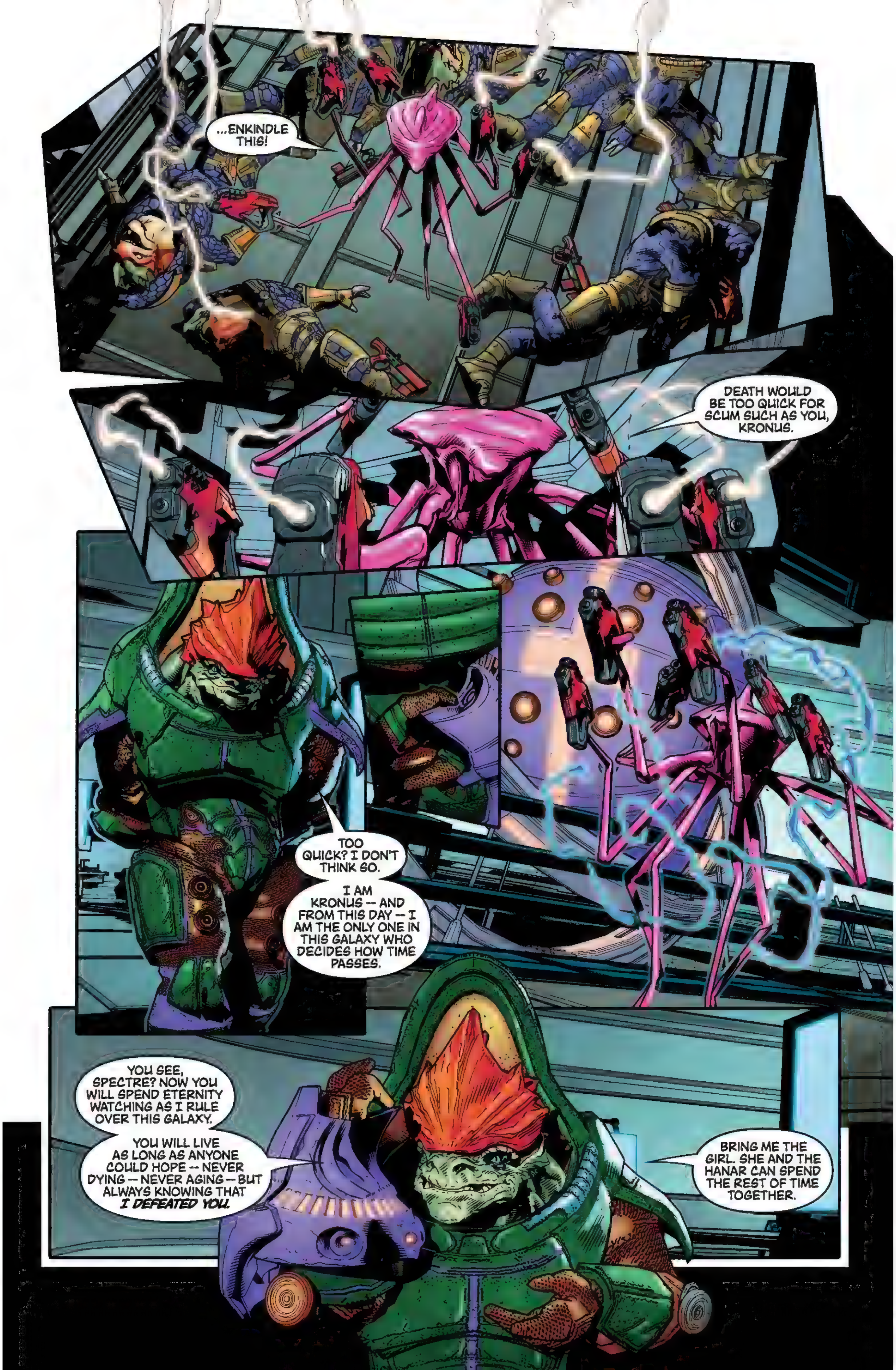

I THOUGHT VIRMIRE WAS STILL UNINHABITABLE.
YOU ARE REFERENCING THE NUCLEAR BLAST.
AS YOU SAID YOURSELF, IS THERE A BETTER PLACE TO HIDE THAN THE PLACE WHERE FEWEST EXPECT TO LOOK?
GOOD POINT. LOOK!
YES, THAT FACILITY IS NEWLY BUILT.
BE CAREFUL. IF WE CAN SEE THEM, THEY CAN SEE US.
THIS ONE DOES NOT REQUIRE OR APPRECIATE YOUR PILOTING FROM BEHIND.
WELL, THIS ONE DOESN'T WANT TO GET OUR ASSES HANDED TO US BEFORE WE EVEN LAND.
THIS ONE DOESN'T HAVE AN ASS...
THIS LOCATION WILL BE MOST SATISFACTORY.

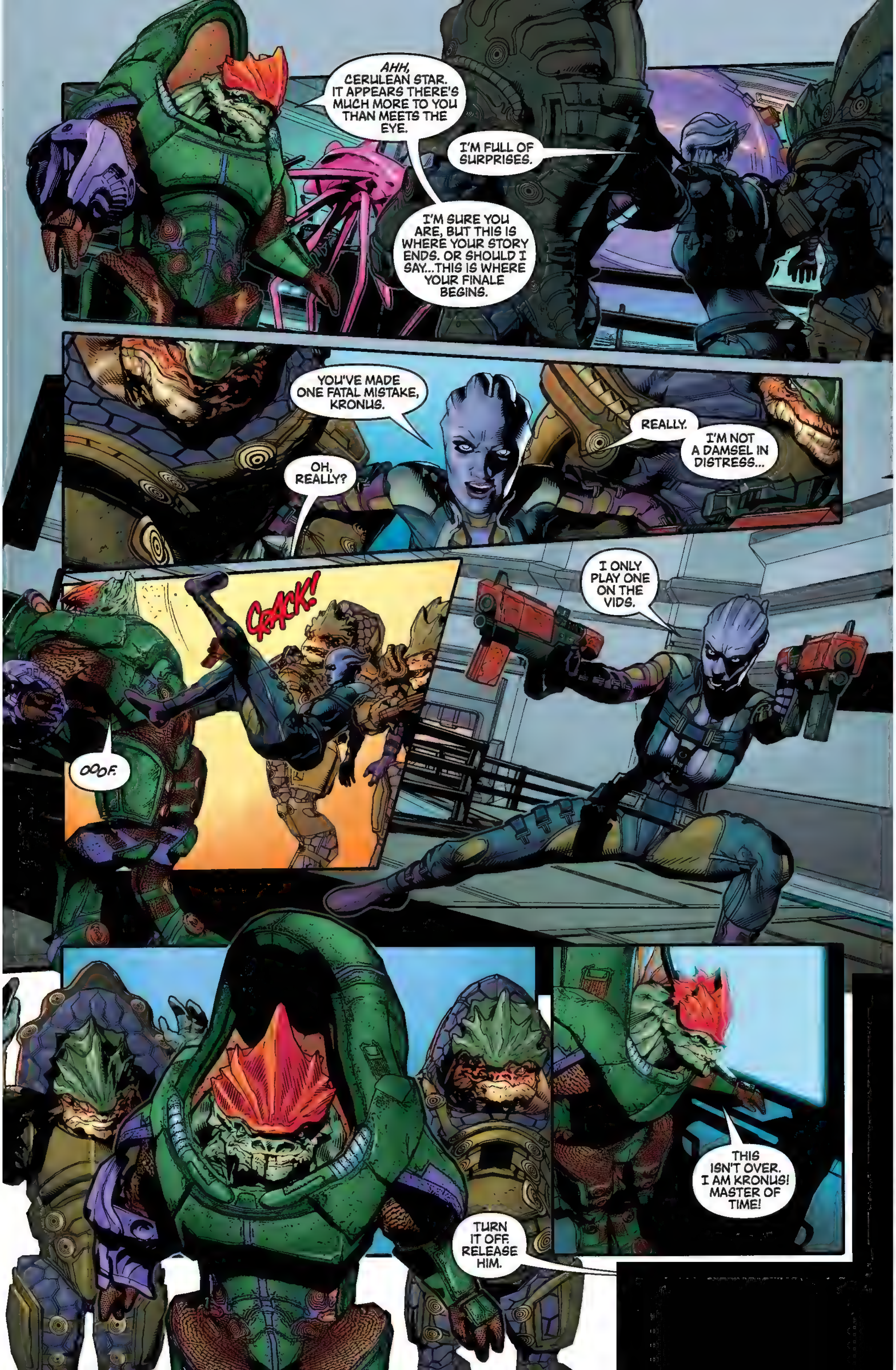

THIS PLACE LOOKS COMPLETELY ABANDONED.
IF THERE'S A SINGLE THING THIS ONE EXCELS AT...
...IT IS *"SEEING"* WHAT MOST CANNOT SEE.
SUCH AS?
TRACKS. THERE IN THE DUST.
WHERE? I DON'T EVEN SEE THE DUST...
ALLOW THIS ONE TO ENLIGHTEN YOU.
ROGER THAT. WE'RE ALMOST AT THE NORTH ENTRANCE NOW. WE'LL CHECK IT OUT.
TOO BAD YOU DON'T LISTEN AS WELL AS YOU *"SEE."*
I TOLD YOU THEY'D SEE US COMING.
THIS ONE IS NOT CONCERNED WITH CONFLICT. THIS ONE *RELISHES* IT.
IT'S PROBABLY MORE PYJACKS IN THE WIRING. HOW THE DAMN THINGS SWIM ALL THE WAY OUT HERE IS...
THIS ONE THINKS THE KROGAN SCUM MUST ASK THE QUESTION -- DOES IT FEEL FORTUNATE?
DO YOU, SCUM?

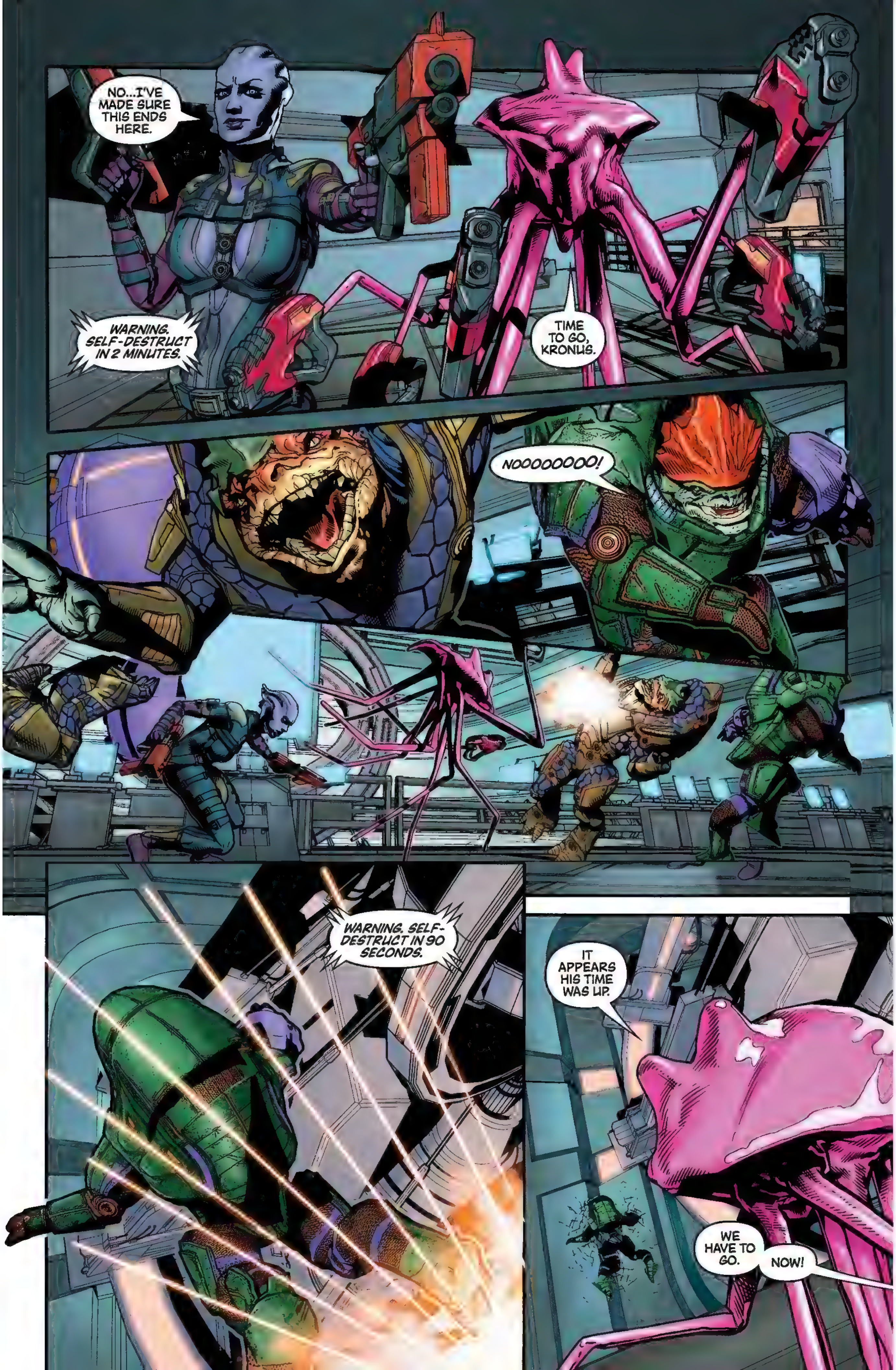

FIRE!
IMPRESSIVE. BUT NOISY.
IT APPEARS THIS ONE'S HEAT SINK HAS OVERHEATED...
WOULD YOU CARE TO COOL IT OFF?
YOU'VE GOT FOUR FREE HANDS, HONEY...
...DISCHARGE IT YOURSELF.
C'MON. THEY KNOW WE'RE HERE NOW. LET'S FIND KRONUS AND END THIS.

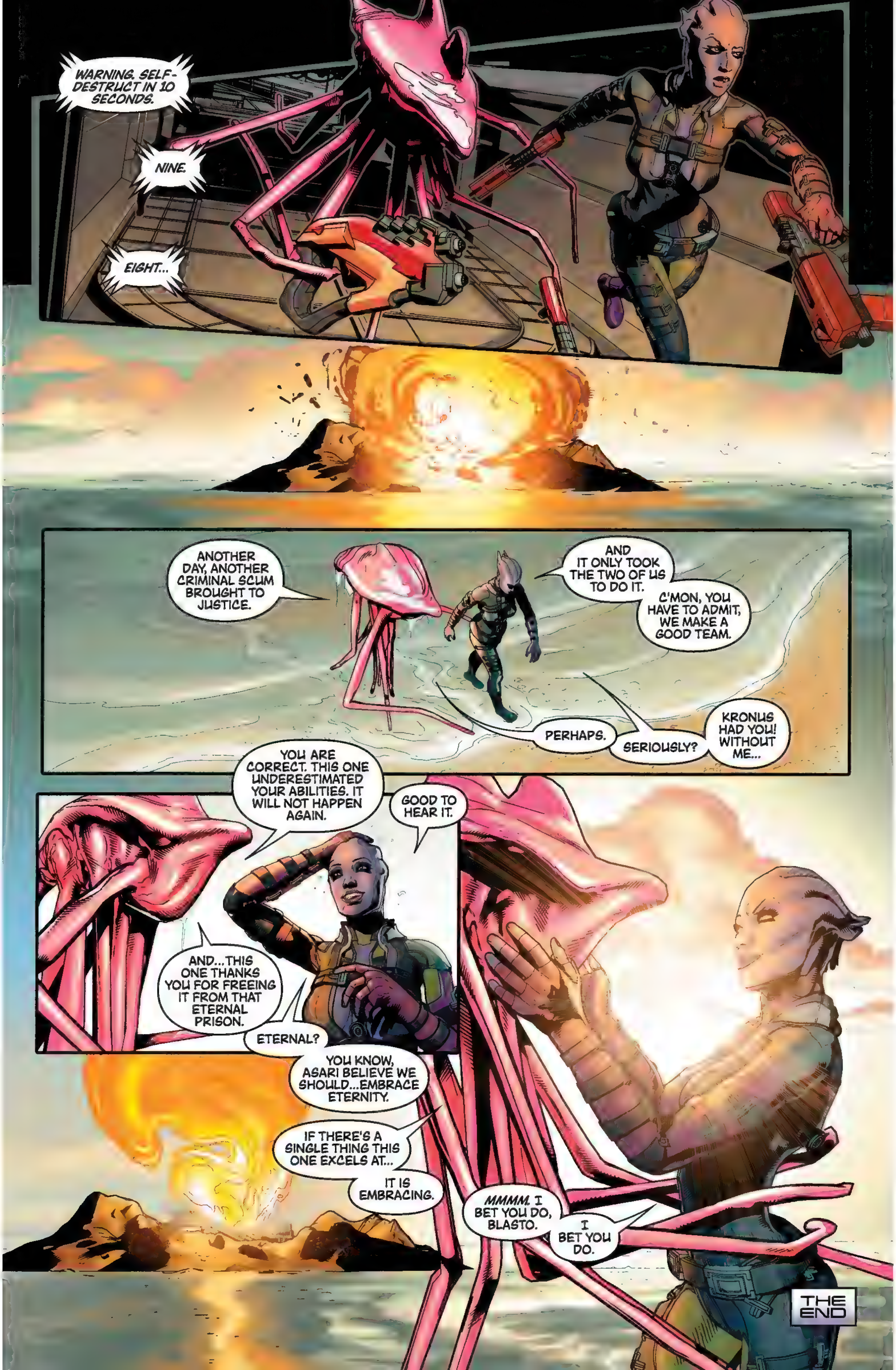

DEEP INSIDE THE BASE...
BLASTO. IN HERE...
IT'S WORSE THAN WE THOUGHT.
IT ALWAYS IS.
KRONUS IS BUILDING A MACHINE...
A MACHINE THAT CAN...
FREEZE TIME.
TO WHAT PURPOSE?
I DON'T KNOW, BUT IT CAN'T BE GOOD...
KRONUS...
TIME TO FACE YOUR FUTURE!
ALL TROOPS, TO THE SCIENCE WING. DETAIN THE INTRUDERS. I WANT THEM ALIVE.
I CAN OVERRIDE THE BASE SYSTEMS FROM HERE...MAYBE DO A LITTLE DAMAGE. OR WORSE.
CAN YOU KEEP HIS GOONS OFF ME?
IF THERE'S A SINGLE THING THIS ONE EXCELS AT...
JUST GO!


BLASTO THE SPECTRE. PREDICTABLE AND, AS USUAL, PUNCTUAL.
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS SINCE YOU PUT ME AWAY.
AND NOW, IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND...
...DIE!
BY THE DEPTHS OF KAHJE...
BY THE LIGHT OF THOSE WHO GAVE US LIFE!


...ENKINDLE THIS!
DEATH WOULD BE TOO QUICK FOR SCUM SUCH AS YOU, KRONUS.
TOO QUICK? I DON'T THINK SO.
I AM KRONUS -- AND FROM THIS DAY -- I AM THE ONLY ONE IN THIS GALAXY WHO DECIDES HOW TIME PASSES.
YOU SEE, SPECTRE? NOW YOU WILL SPEND ETERNITY WATCHING AS I RULE OVER THIS GALAXY.
YOU WILL LIVE AS LONG AS ANYONE COULD HOPE -- NEVER DYING -- NEVER AGING -- BUT ALWAYS KNOWING THAT *I DEFEATED YOU.*
BRING ME THE GIRL. SHE AND THE HANAR CAN SPEND THE REST OF TIME TOGETHER.


AHH, CERULEAN STAR. IT APPEARS THERE'S MUCH MORE TO YOU THAN MEETS THE EYE.
I'M FULL OF SURPRISES.
I'M SURE YOU ARE, BUT THIS IS WHERE YOUR STORY ENDS. OR SHOULD I SAY...THIS IS WHERE YOUR FINALE BEGINS.
YOU'VE MADE ONE FATAL MISTAKE, KRONUS.
OH, REALLY?
REALLY.
I'M NOT A DAMSEL IN DISTRESS...
I ONLY PLAY ONE ON THE VIDS.
CRACK!
OOOF.
THIS ISN'T OVER. I AM KRONUS! MASTER OF TIME!
TURN IT OFF. RELEASE HIM.


NO...I'VE MADE SURE THIS ENDS HERE.
WARNING. SELF-DESTRUCT IN 2 MINUTES.
TIME TO GO, KRONUS.
NOOOOOOOO!
WARNING. SELF-DESTRUCT IN 90 SECONDS.
IT APPEARS HIS TIME WAS UP.
WE HAVE TO GO.
NOW!


WARNING. SELF-DESTRUCT IN 10 SECONDS.
NINE.
EIGHT...
ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER CRIMINAL SCUM BROUGHT TO JUSTICE.
AND IT ONLY TOOK THE TWO OF US TO DO IT.
C'MON, YOU HAVE TO ADMIT, WE MAKE A GOOD TEAM.
PERHAPS.
SERIOUSLY?
KRONUS HAD YOU! WITHOUT ME...
YOU ARE CORRECT. THIS ONE UNDERESTIMATED YOUR ABILITIES. IT WILL NOT HAPPEN AGAIN.
GOOD TO HEAR IT.
AND...THIS ONE THANKS YOU FOR FREEING IT FROM THAT ETERNAL PRISON.
ETERNAL?
YOU KNOW, ASARI BELIEVE WE SHOULD...EMBRACE ETERNITY.
IF THERE'S A SINGLE THING THIS ONE EXCELS AT...
IT IS EMBRACING.
MMMM. I BET YOU DO, BLASTO.
I BET YOU DO.
THE END

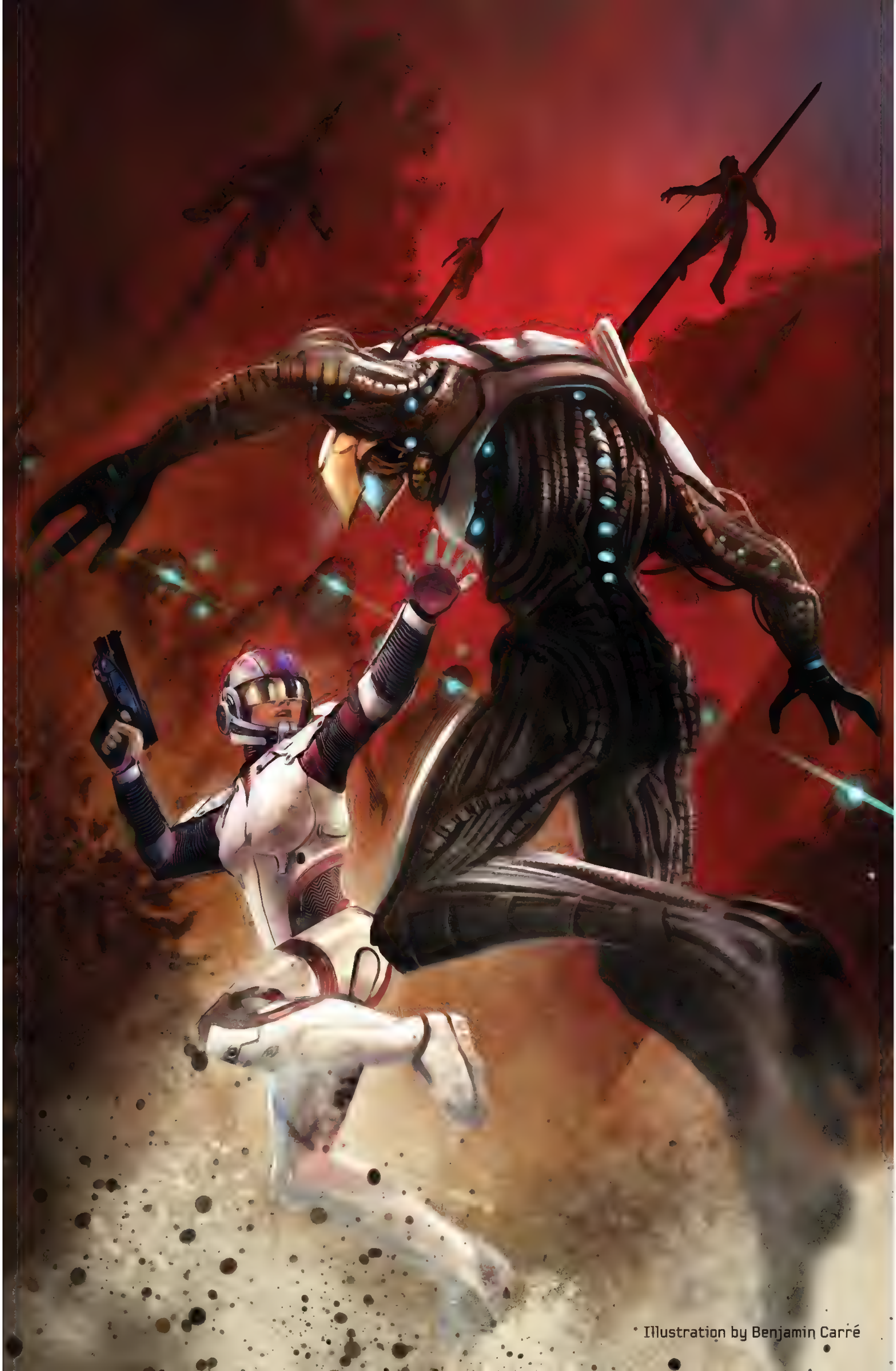


Illustration by Benjamin Carré

FOUNDATION

STORY
Mac Walters *(Pages 427–646)*
Mac Walters and Jeremy Barlow *(Pages 647–712)*

SCRIPT
Mac Walters *(Pages 427–646)*
Jeremy Barlow *(Pages 647–712)*

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Matthew Clark *(Pencils, Pages 515–558)*
Drew Geraci *(Inks, Pages 515–536)*
Sean Parsons *(Inks, Pages 537–558)*
Garry Brown *(Pages 559–580)*

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Michael Atiyeh

LETTERING
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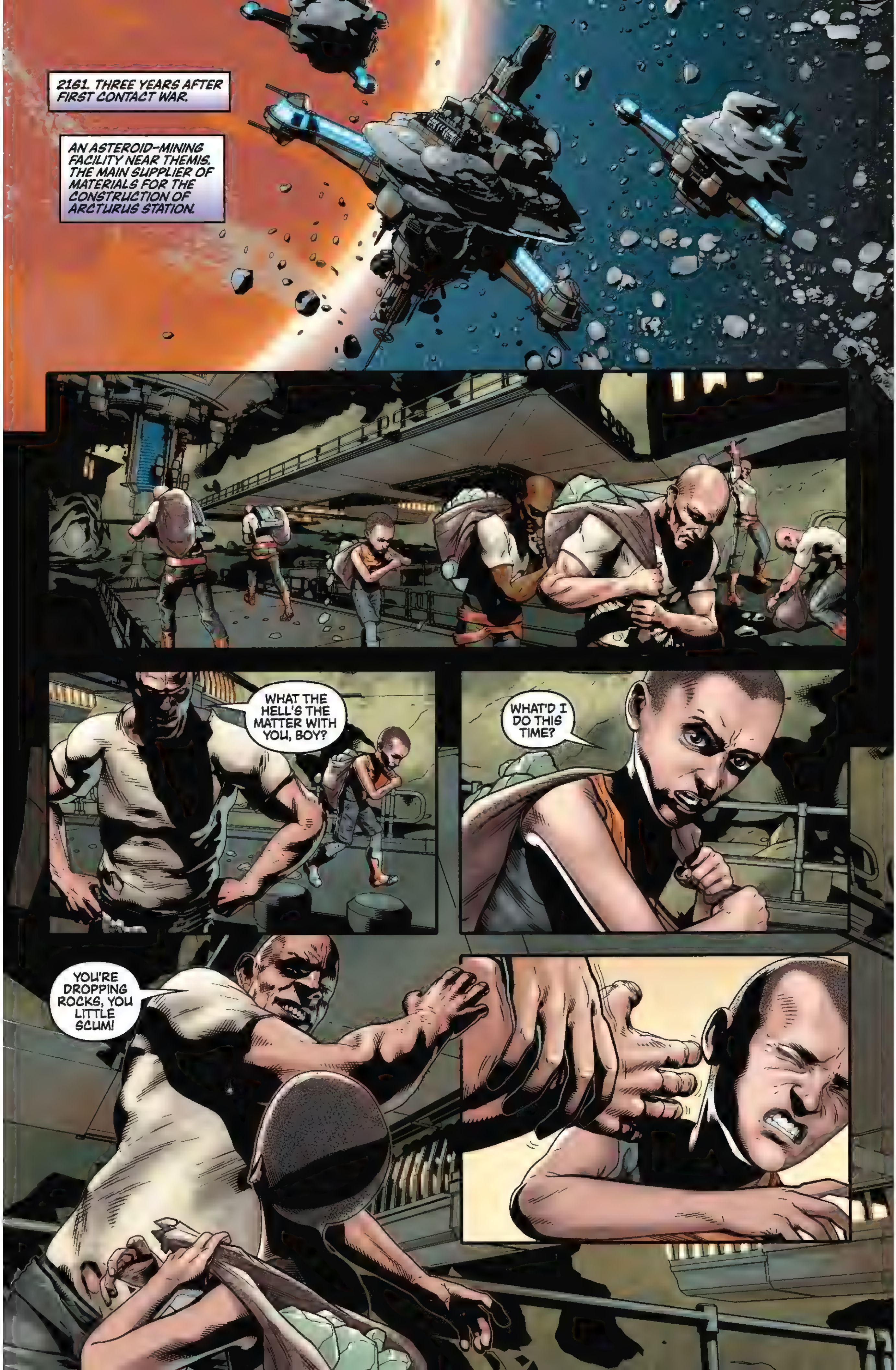
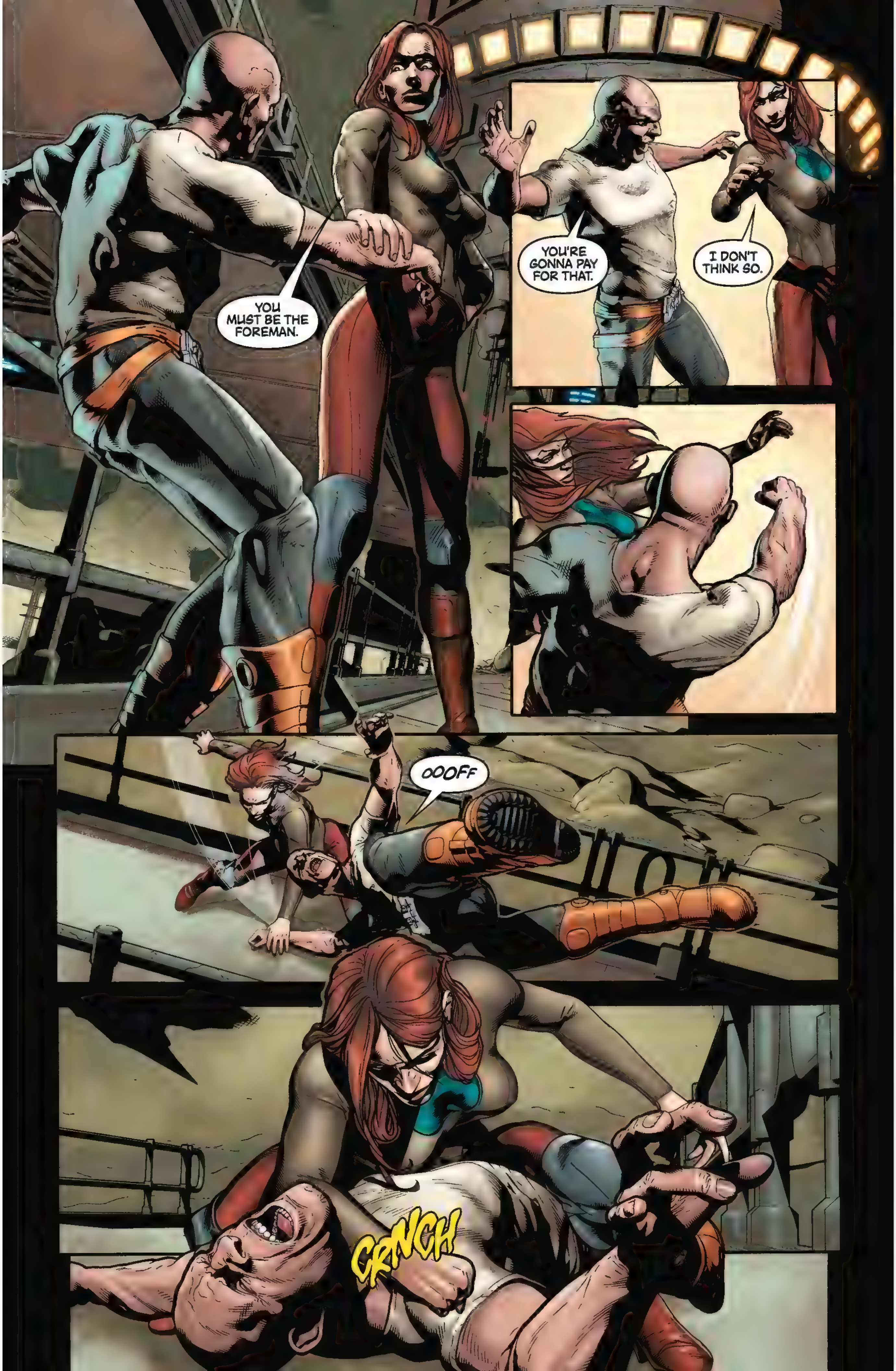
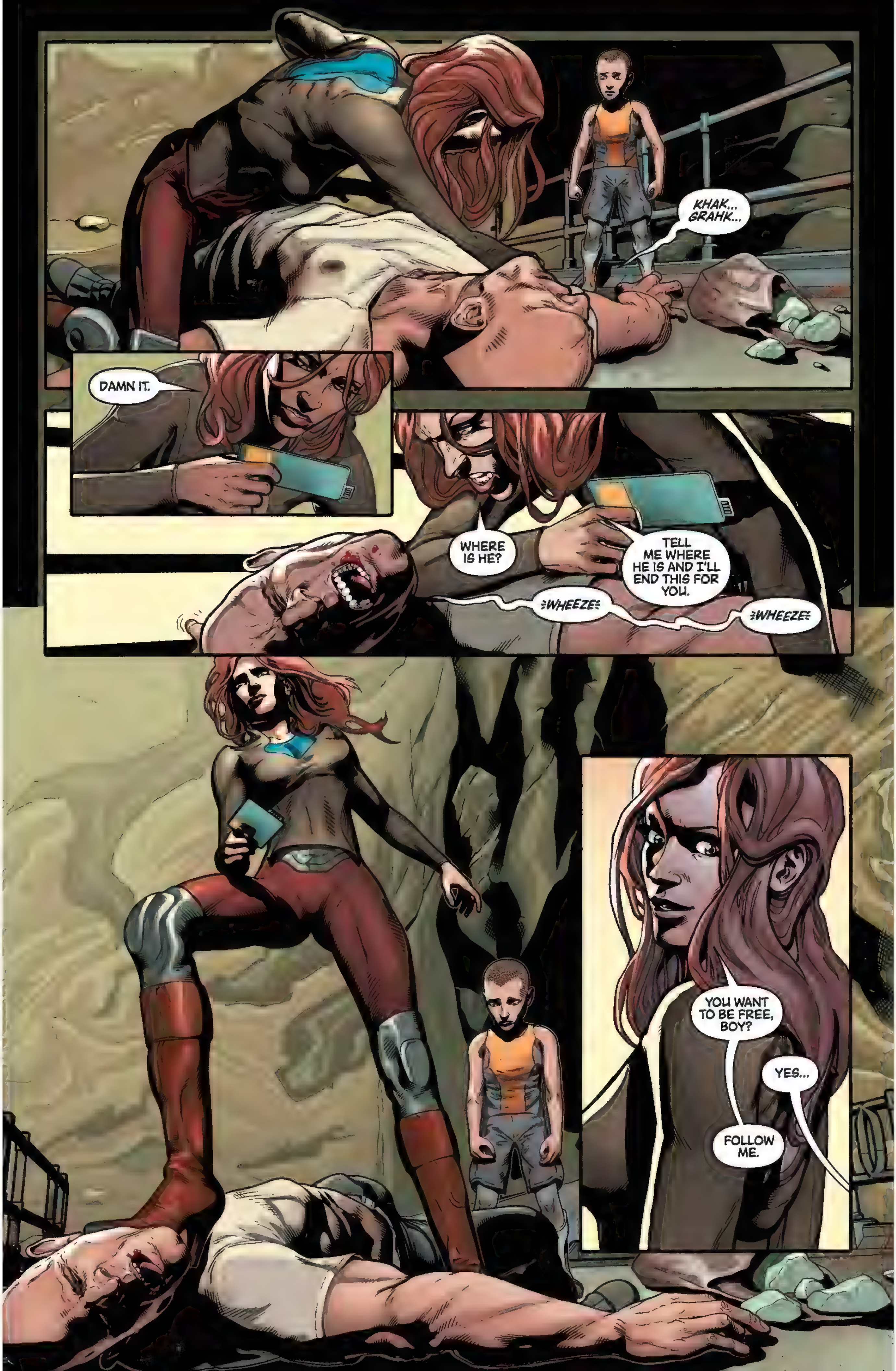
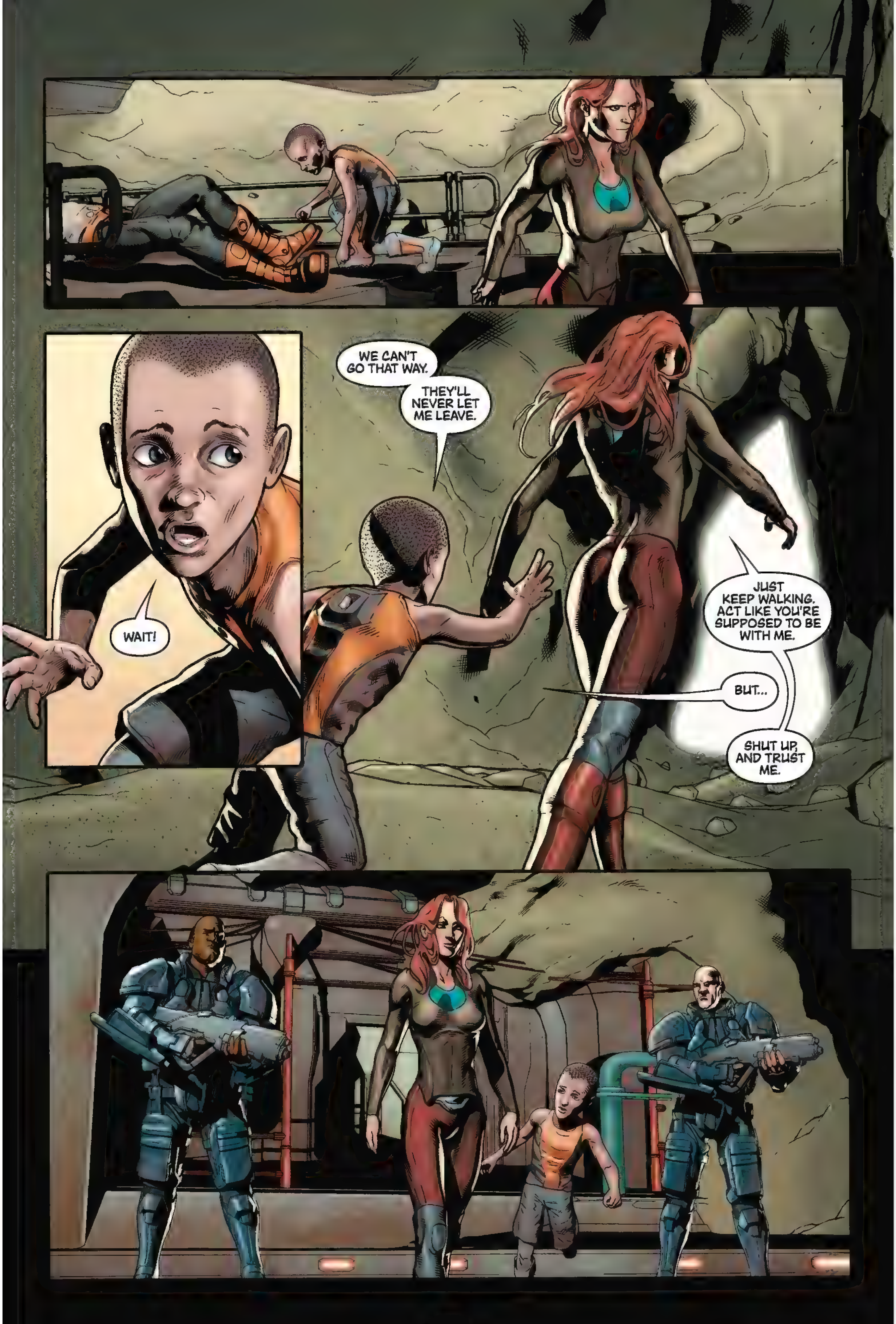
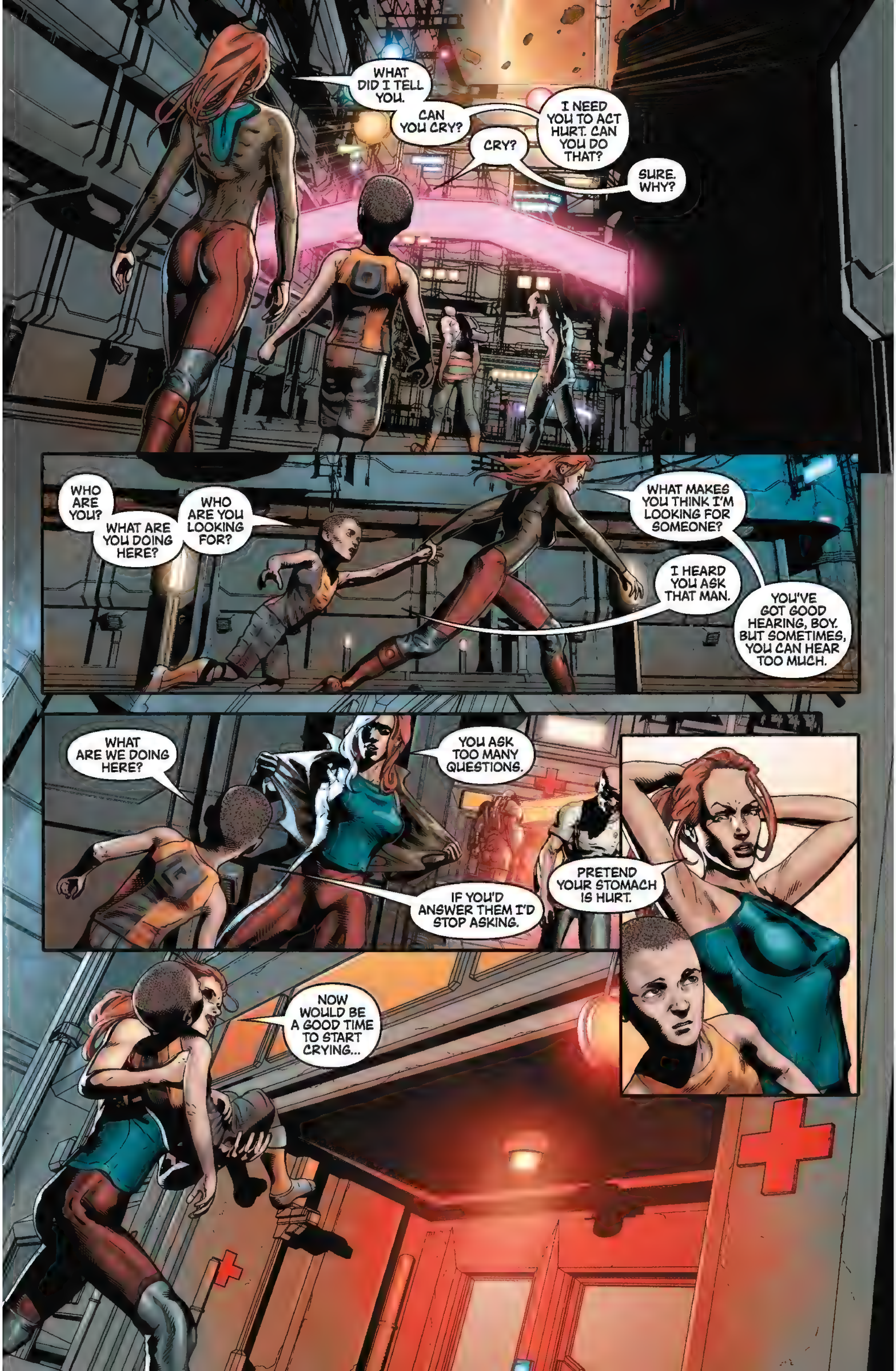
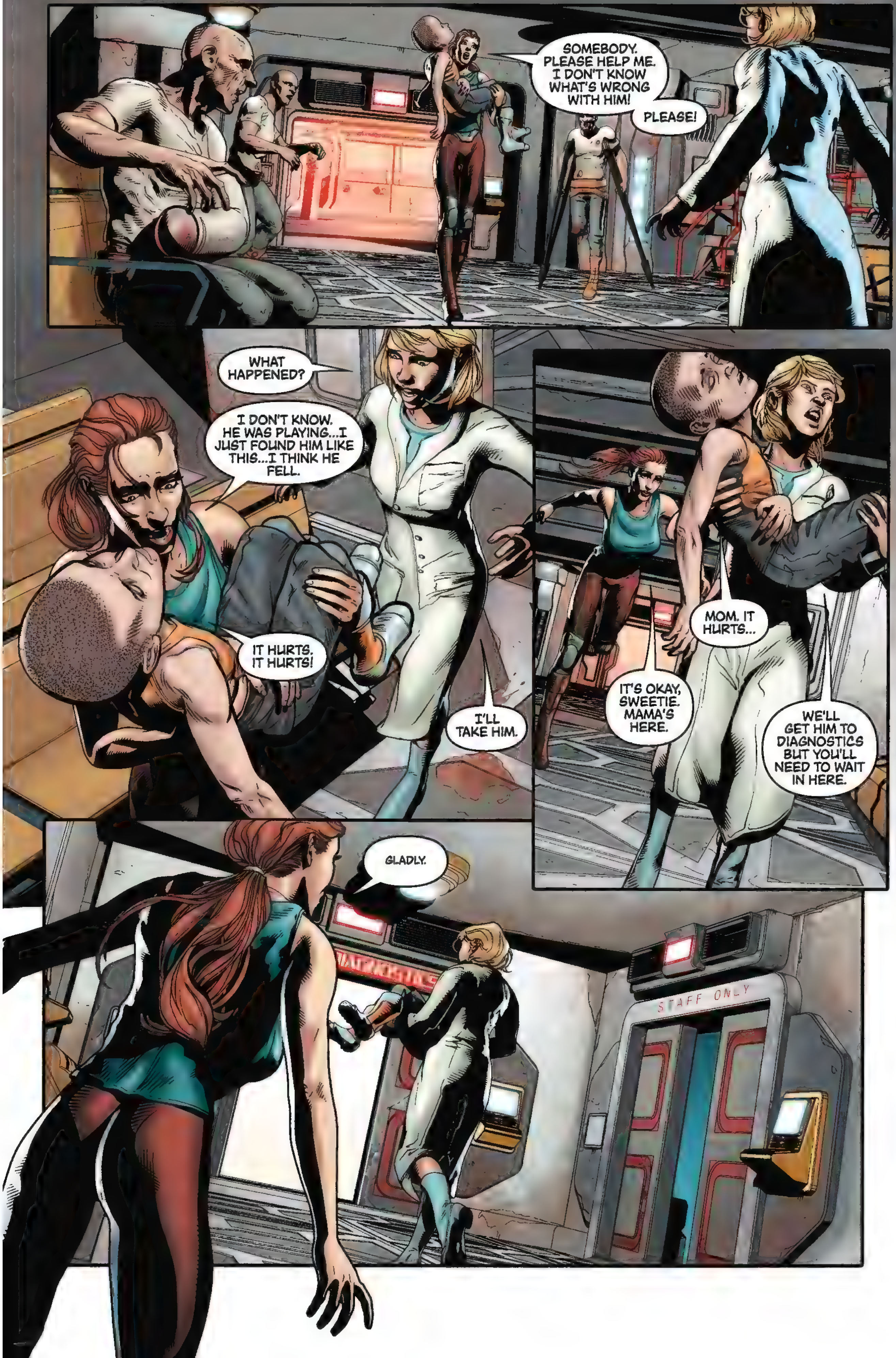

2161. THREE YEARS AFTER FIRST CONTACT WAR.
AN ASTEROID-MINING FACILITY NEAR THEMIS. THE MAIN SUPPLIER OF MATERIALS FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF ARCTURUS STATION.
WHAT THE HELL'S THE MATTER WITH YOU, BOY?
WHAT'D I DO THIS TIME?
YOU'RE DROPPING ROCKS, YOU LITTLE SCUM!

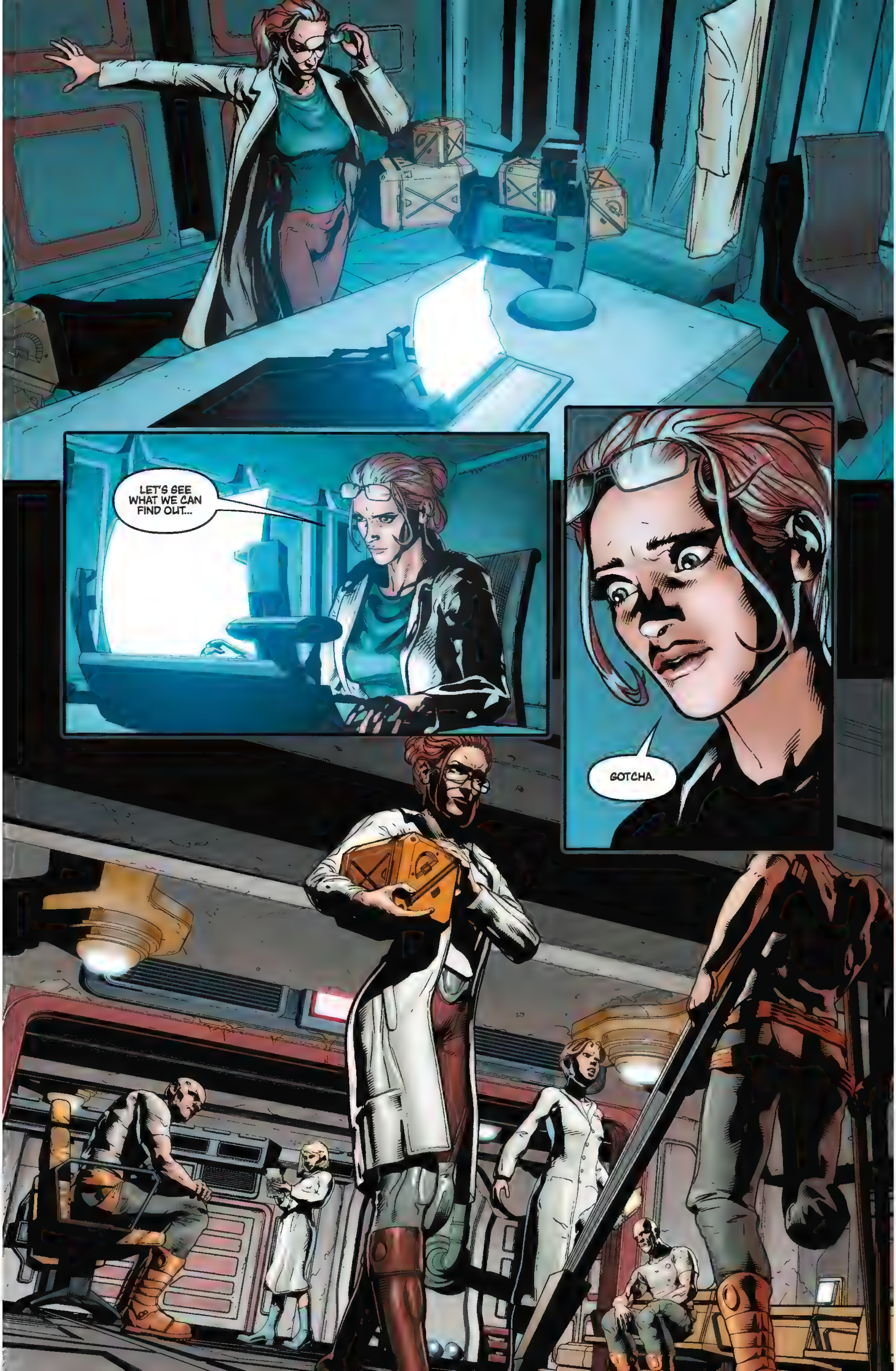

YOU MUST BE THE FOREMAN.
YOU'RE GONNA PAY FOR THAT.
I DON'T THINK SO.
OOOFF
CRNCH

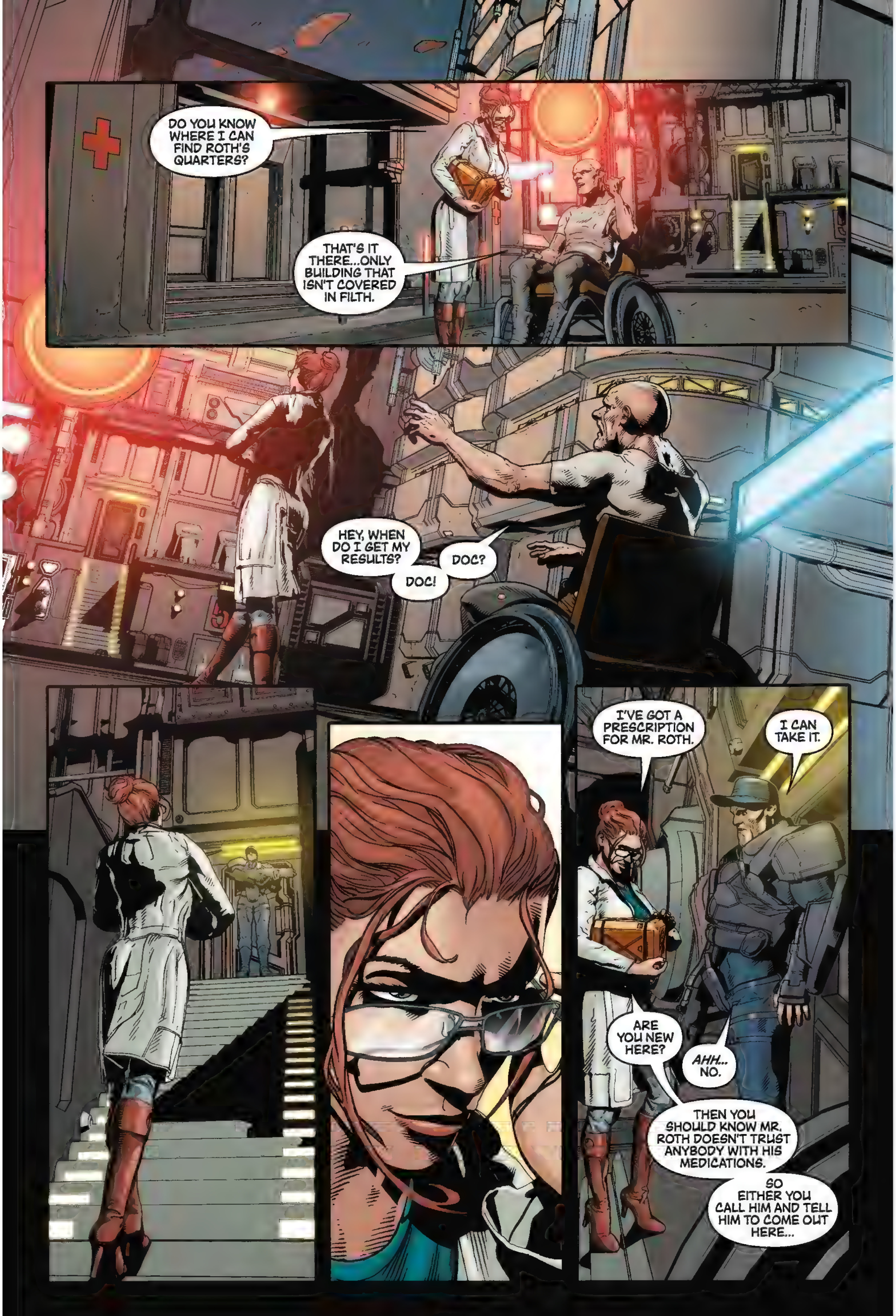

KHAK... GRAHK...
DAMN IT.
WHERE IS HE?
TELL ME WHERE HE IS AND I'LL END THIS FOR YOU.
WHEEZE
WHEEZE
YOU WANT TO BE FREE, BOY?
YES...
FOLLOW ME.

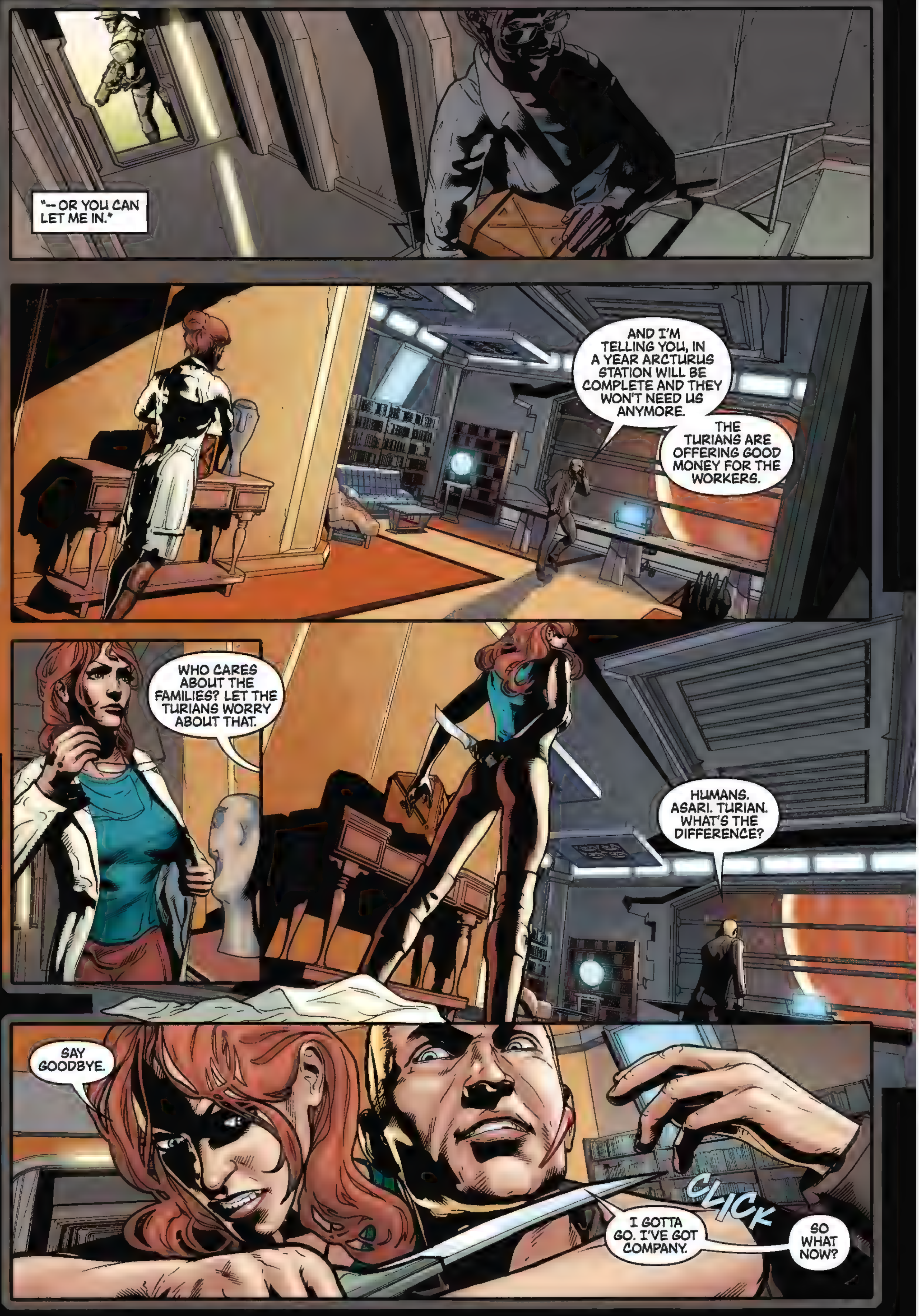

WAIT!
WE CAN'T GO THAT WAY.
THEY'LL NEVER LET ME LEAVE.
JUST KEEP WALKING. ACT LIKE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE WITH ME.
BUT...
SHUT UP, AND TRUST ME.

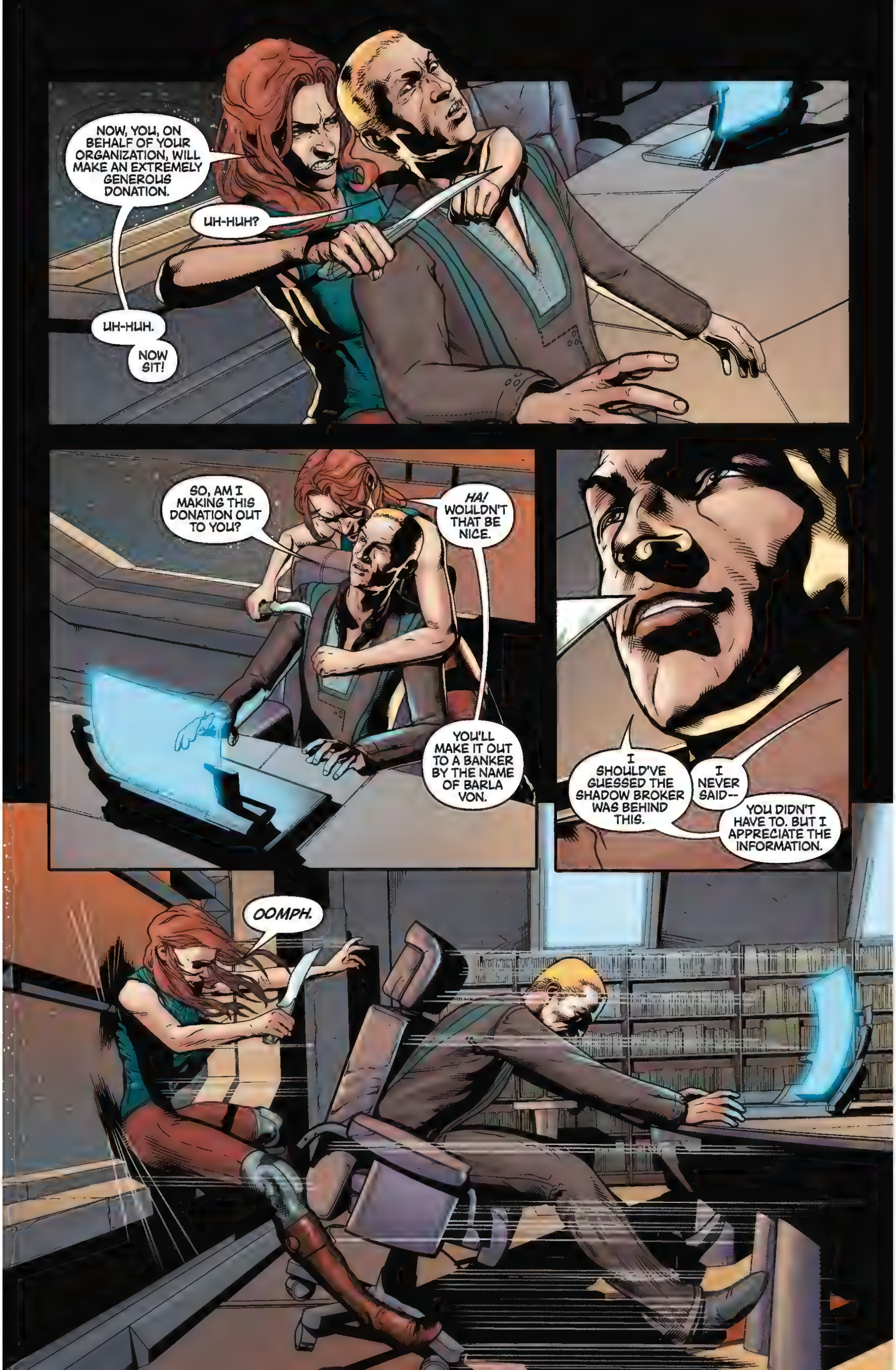

WHAT DID I TELL YOU.
CAN YOU CRY?
CRY?
I NEED YOU TO ACT HURT. CAN YOU DO THAT?
SURE. WHY?
WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
WHO ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'M LOOKING FOR SOMEONE?
I HEARD YOU ASK THAT MAN.
YOU'VE GOT GOOD HEARING, BOY. BUT SOMETIMES, YOU CAN HEAR TOO MUCH.
WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?
YOU ASK TOO MANY QUESTIONS.
IF YOU'D ANSWER THEM I'D STOP ASKING.
PRETEND YOUR STOMACH IS HURT.
NOW WOULD BE A GOOD TIME TO START CRYING...

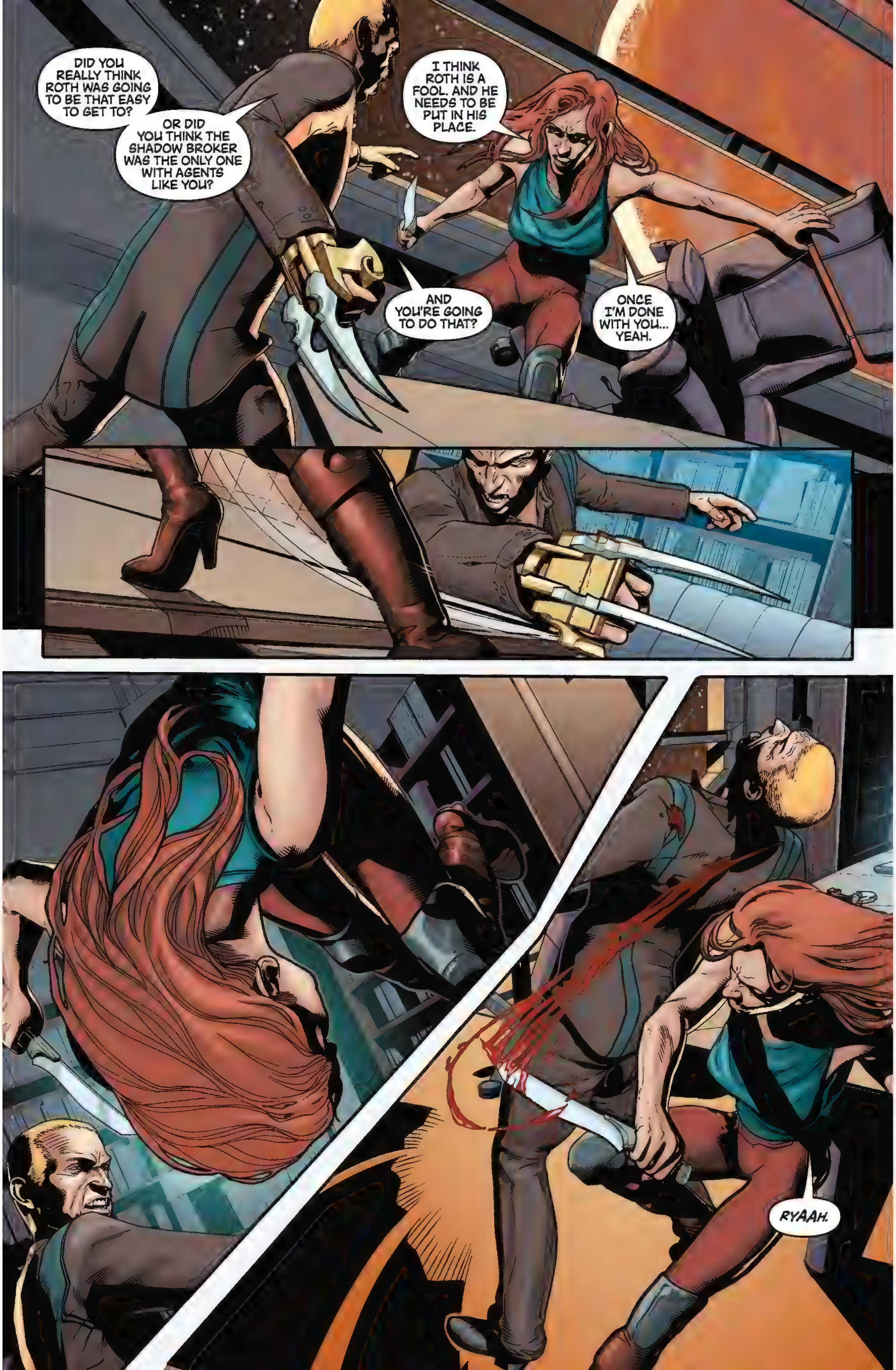

SOMEBODY. PLEASE HELP ME. I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM!
PLEASE!
WHAT HAPPENED?
I DON'T KNOW. HE WAS PLAYING...I JUST FOUND HIM LIKE THIS...I THINK HE FELL.
IT HURTS. IT HURTS!
I'LL TAKE HIM.
MOM. IT HURTS...
IT'S OKAY, SWEETIE. MAMA'S HERE.
WE'LL GET HIM TO DIAGNOSTICS BUT YOU'LL NEED TO WAIT IN HERE.
GLADLY.
STAFF ONLY

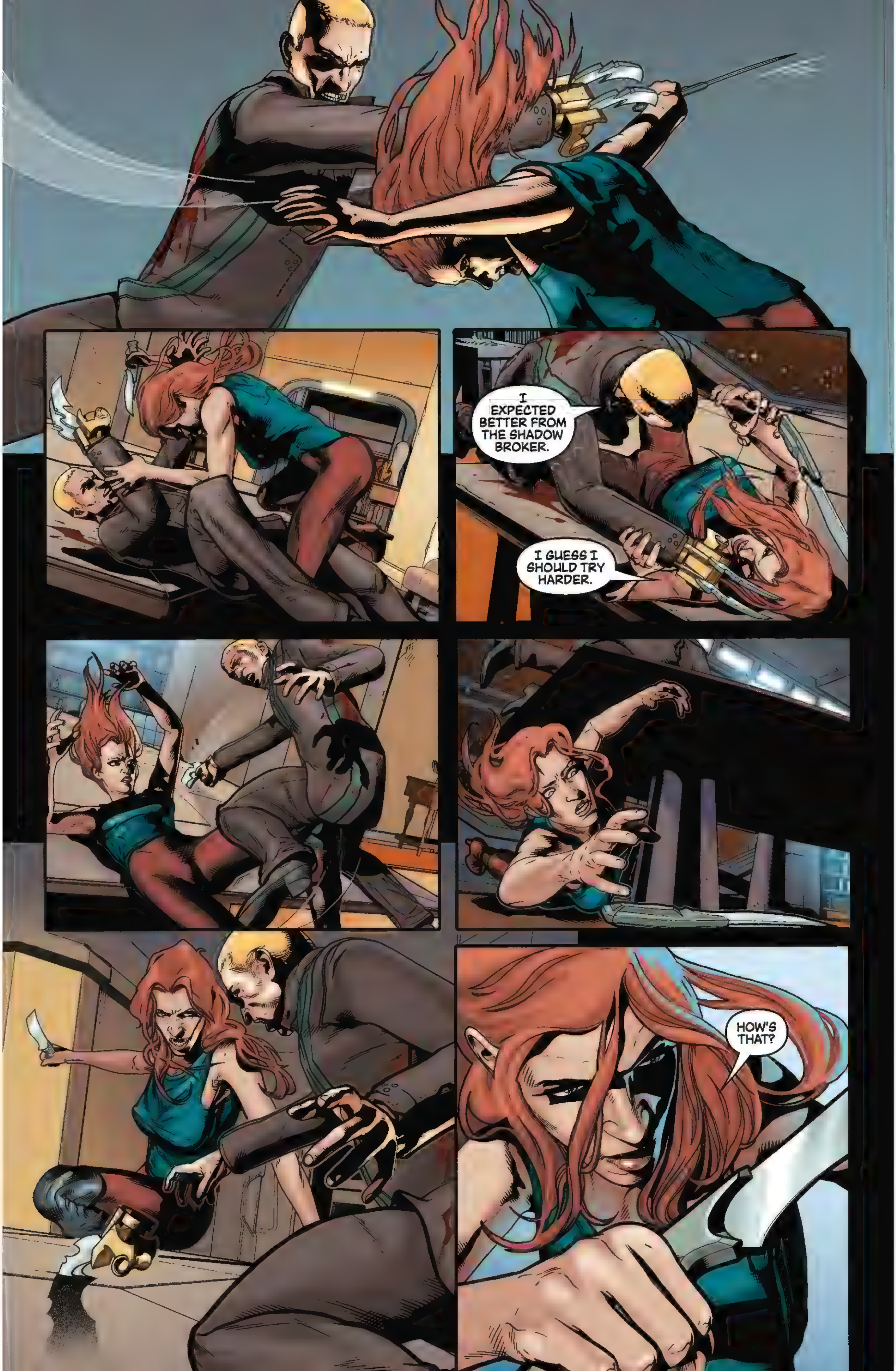

LET'S SEE WHAT WE CAN FIND OUT...
GOTCHA.

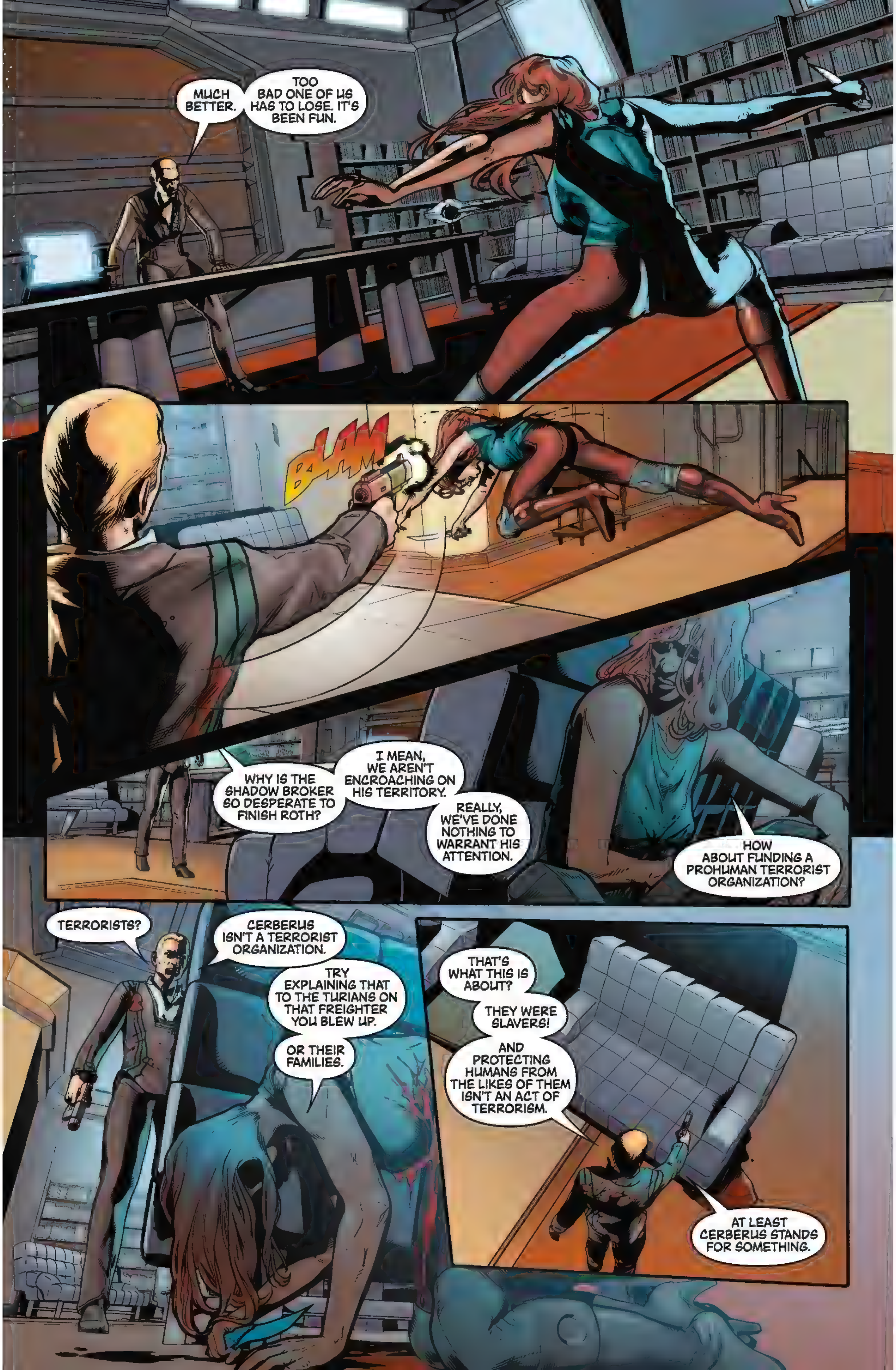

DO YOU KNOW WHERE I CAN FIND ROTH'S QUARTERS?
THAT'S IT THERE...ONLY BUILDING THAT ISN'T COVERED IN FILTH.
HEY, WHEN DO I GET MY RESULTS?
DOC?
DOC!
I'VE GOT A PRESCRIPTION FOR MR. ROTH.
I CAN TAKE IT.
ARE YOU NEW HERE?
AHH... NO.
THEN YOU SHOULD KNOW MR. ROTH DOESN'T TRUST ANYBODY WITH HIS MEDICATIONS.
SO EITHER YOU CALL HIM AND TELL HIM TO COME OUT HERE...

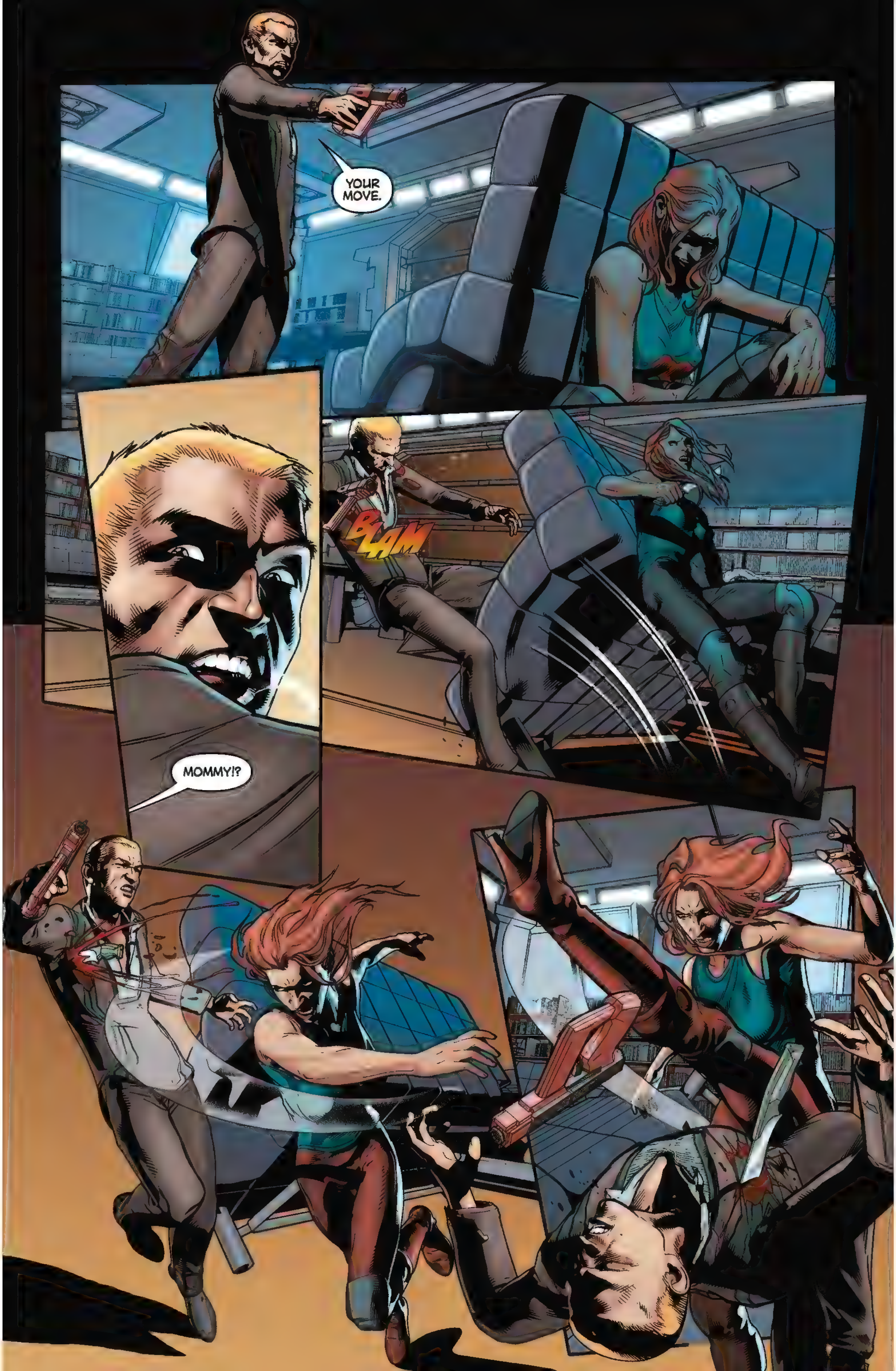

"—OR YOU CAN LET ME IN."
AND I'M TELLING YOU, IN A YEAR ARCTURUS STATION WILL BE COMPLETE AND THEY WON'T NEED US ANYMORE.
THE TURIANS ARE OFFERING GOOD MONEY FOR THE WORKERS.
WHO CARES ABOUT THE FAMILIES? LET THE TURIANS WORRY ABOUT THAT.
HUMANS. ASARI. TURIAN. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?
SAY GOODBYE.
CLICK
I GOTTA GO. I'VE GOT COMPANY.
SO WHAT NOW?

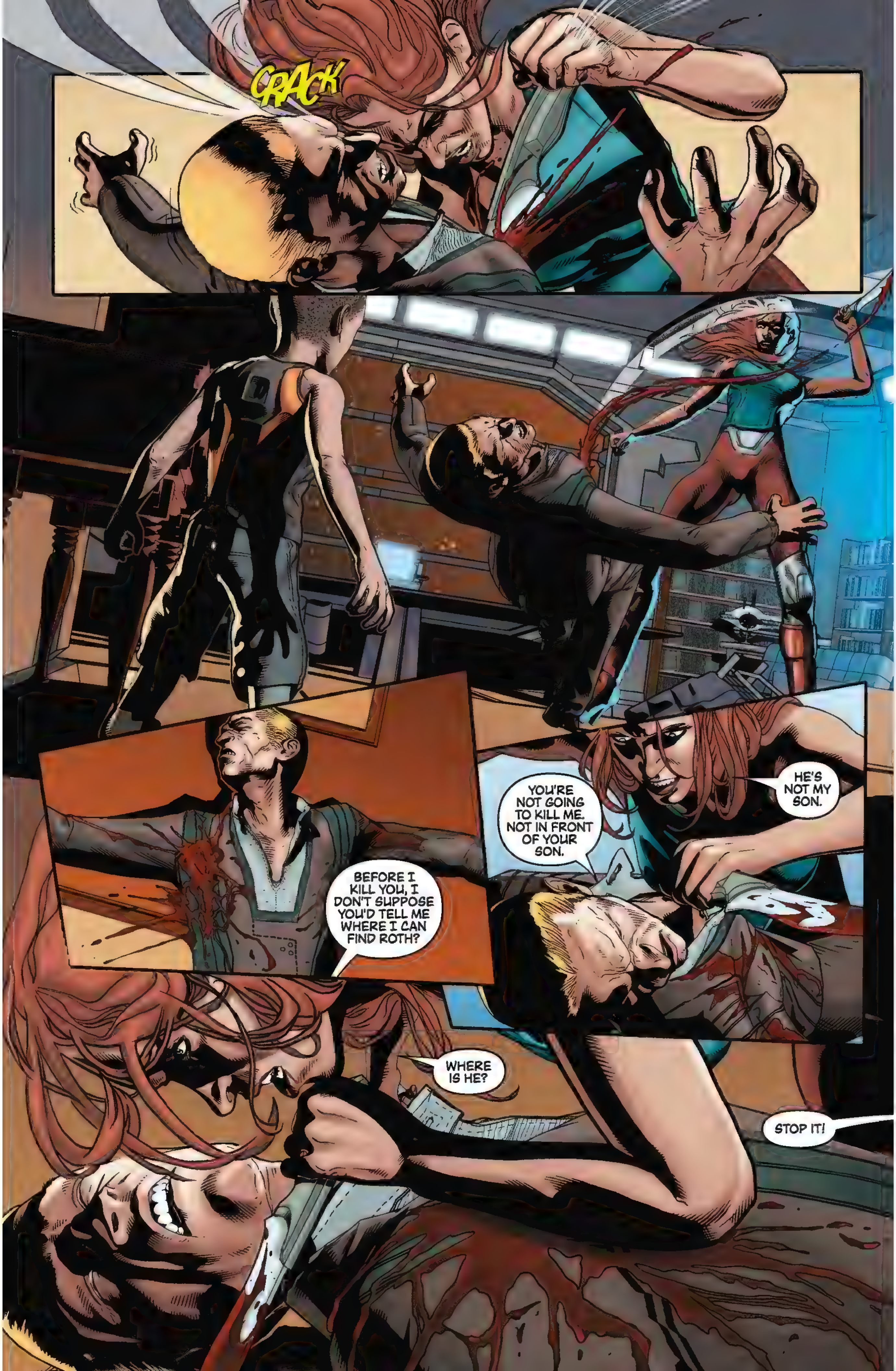

NOW, YOU, ON BEHALF OF YOUR ORGANIZATION, WILL MAKE AN EXTREMELY GENEROUS DONATION.
UH-HUH?
UH-HUH.
NOW SIT!
SO, AM I MAKING THIS DONATION OUT TO YOU?
HA! WOULDN'T THAT BE NICE.
YOU'LL MAKE IT OUT TO A BANKER BY THE NAME OF BARLA VON.
I SHOULD'VE GUESSED THE SHADOW BROKER WAS BEHIND THIS.
I NEVER SAID--
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO. BUT I APPRECIATE THE INFORMATION.
OOMPH.

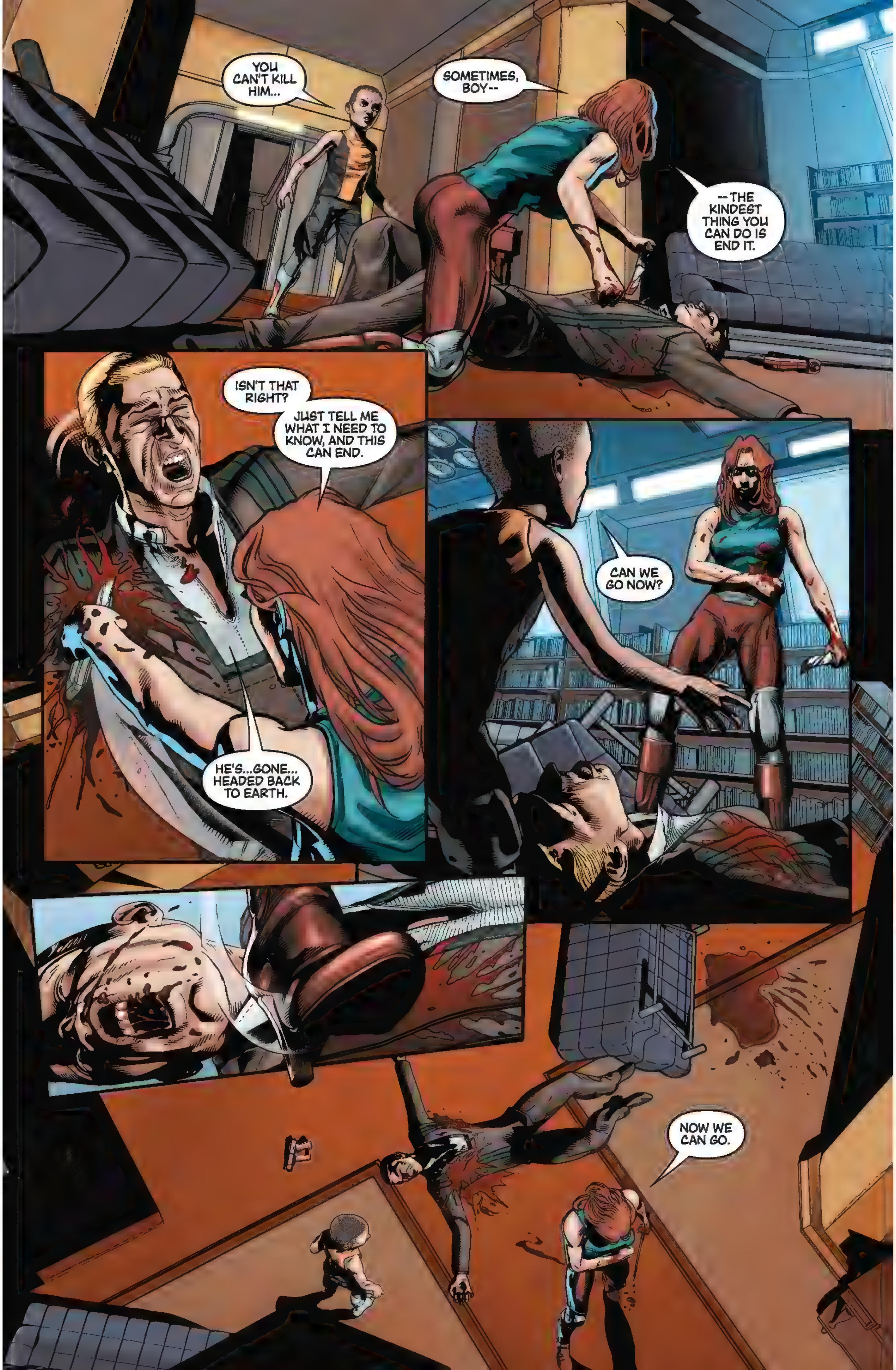

DID YOU REALLY THINK ROTH WAS GOING TO BE THAT EASY TO GET TO?
OR DID YOU THINK THE SHADOW BROKER WAS THE ONLY ONE WITH AGENTS LIKE YOU?
I THINK ROTH IS A FOOL. AND HE NEEDS TO BE PUT IN HIS PLACE.
AND YOU'RE GOING TO DO THAT?
ONCE I'M DONE WITH YOU... YEAH.
RYAAH.

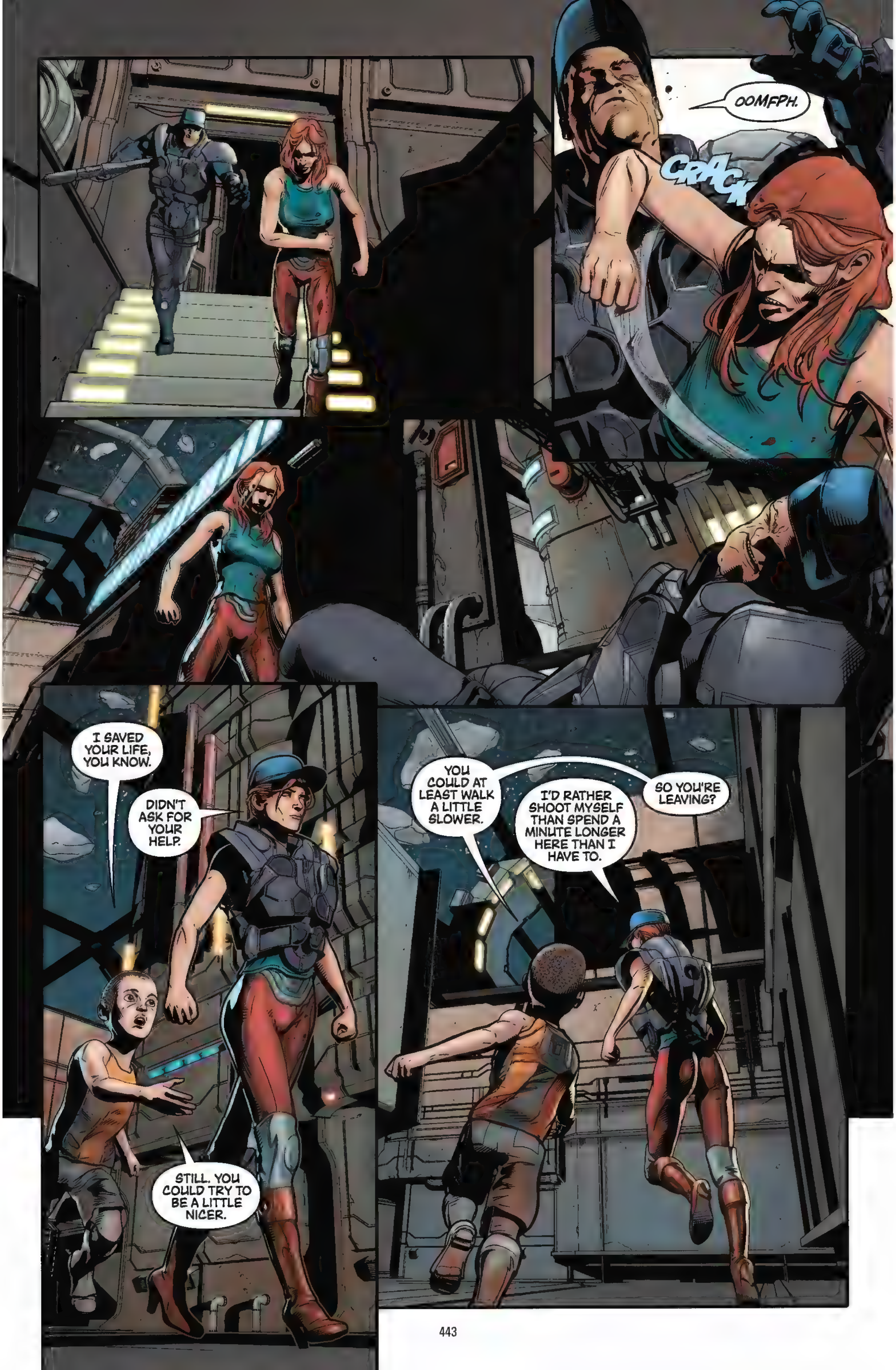

I EXPECTED BETTER FROM THE SHADOW BROKER.
I GUESS I SHOULD TRY HARDER.
HOW'S THAT?

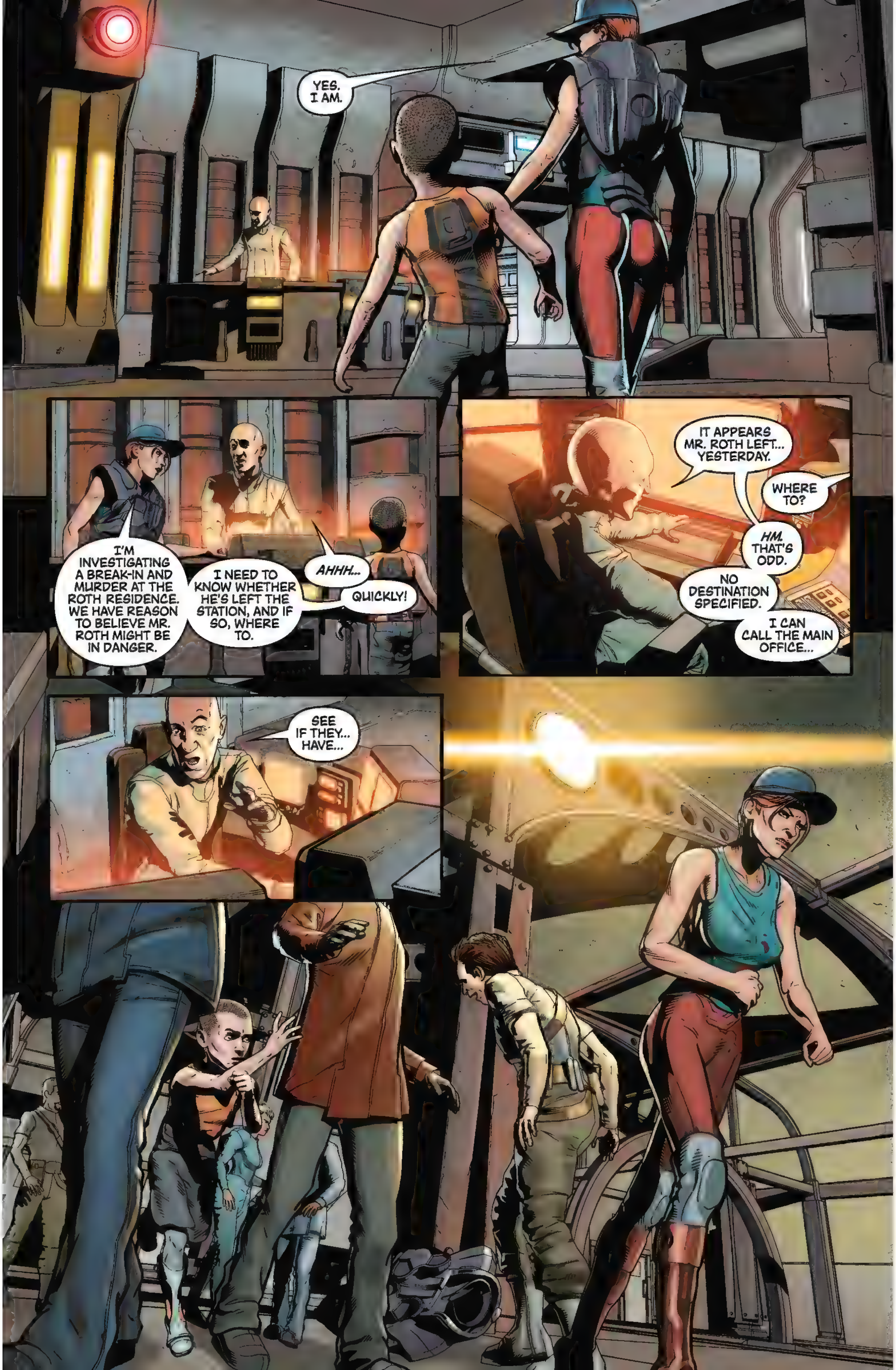

MUCH BETTER.
TOO BAD ONE OF US HAS TO LOSE. IT'S BEEN FUN.
BLAM
WHY IS THE SHADOW BROKER SO DESPERATE TO FINISH ROTH?
I MEAN, WE AREN'T ENCROACHING ON HIS TERRITORY.
REALLY, WE'VE DONE NOTHING TO WARRANT HIS ATTENTION.
HOW ABOUT FUNDING A PROHUMAN TERRORIST ORGANIZATION?
TERRORISTS?
CERBERUS ISN'T A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION.
TRY EXPLAINING THAT TO THE TURIANS ON THAT FREIGHTER YOU BLEW UP.
OR THEIR FAMILIES.
THAT'S WHAT THIS IS ABOUT?
THEY WERE SLAVERS!
AND PROTECTING HUMANS FROM THE LIKES OF THEM ISN'T AN ACT OF TERRORISM.
AT LEAST CERBERUS STANDS FOR SOMETHING.

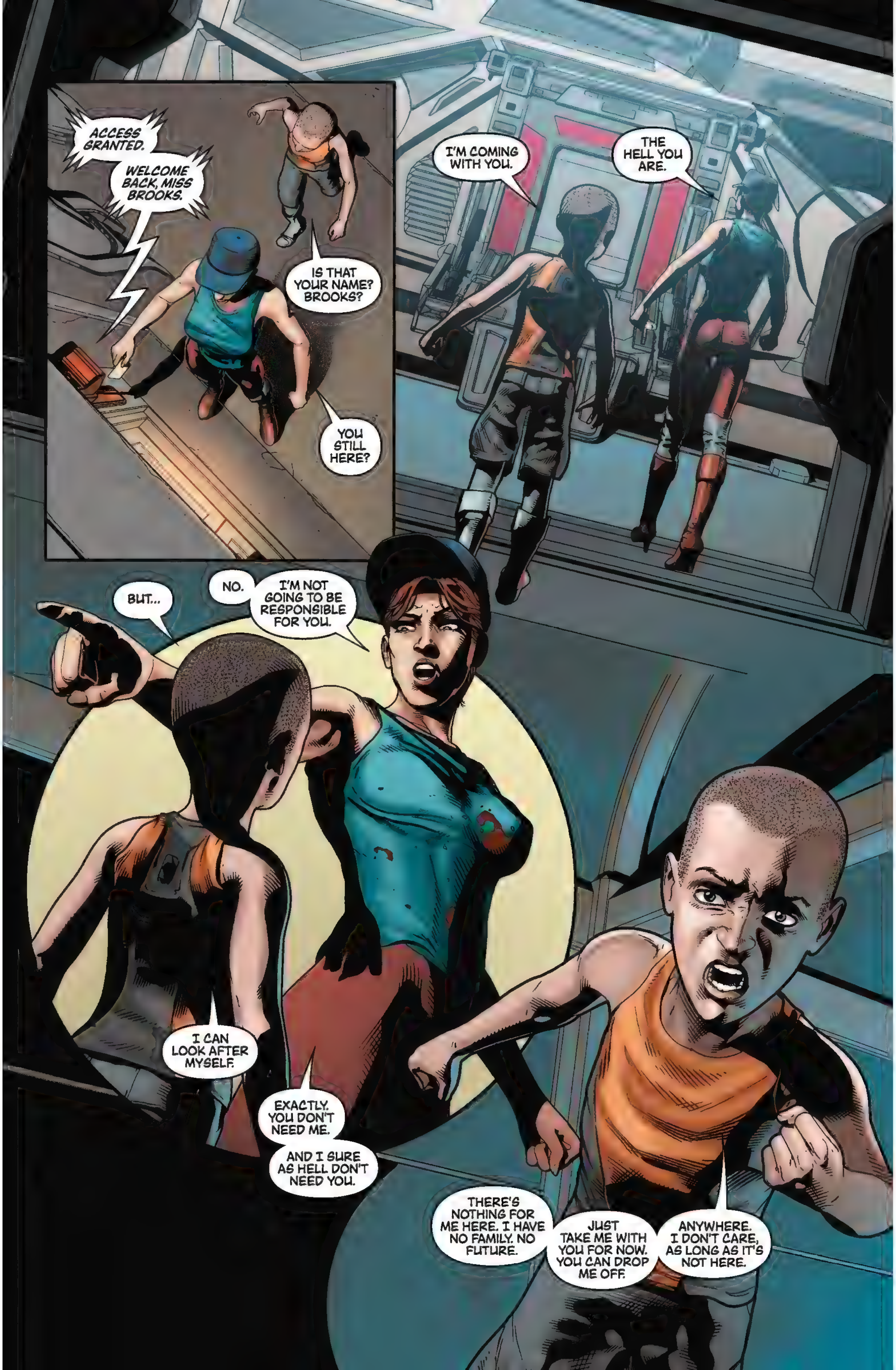

YOUR MOVE.
BLAM
MOMMY!?

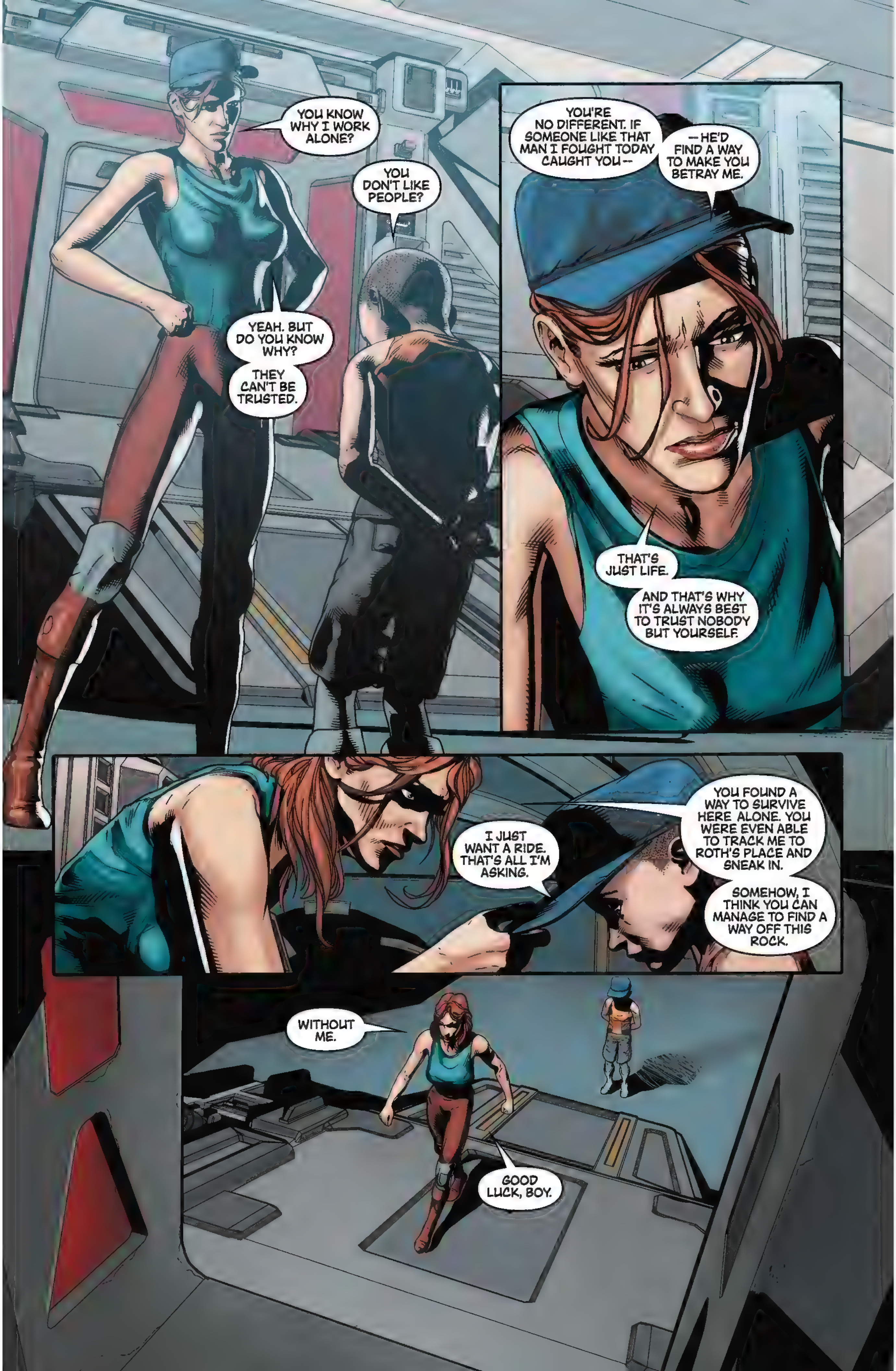

CRACK
BEFORE I KILL YOU, I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'D TELL ME WHERE I CAN FIND ROTH?
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO KILL ME. NOT IN FRONT OF YOUR SON.
HE'S NOT MY SON.
WHERE IS HE?
STOP IT!

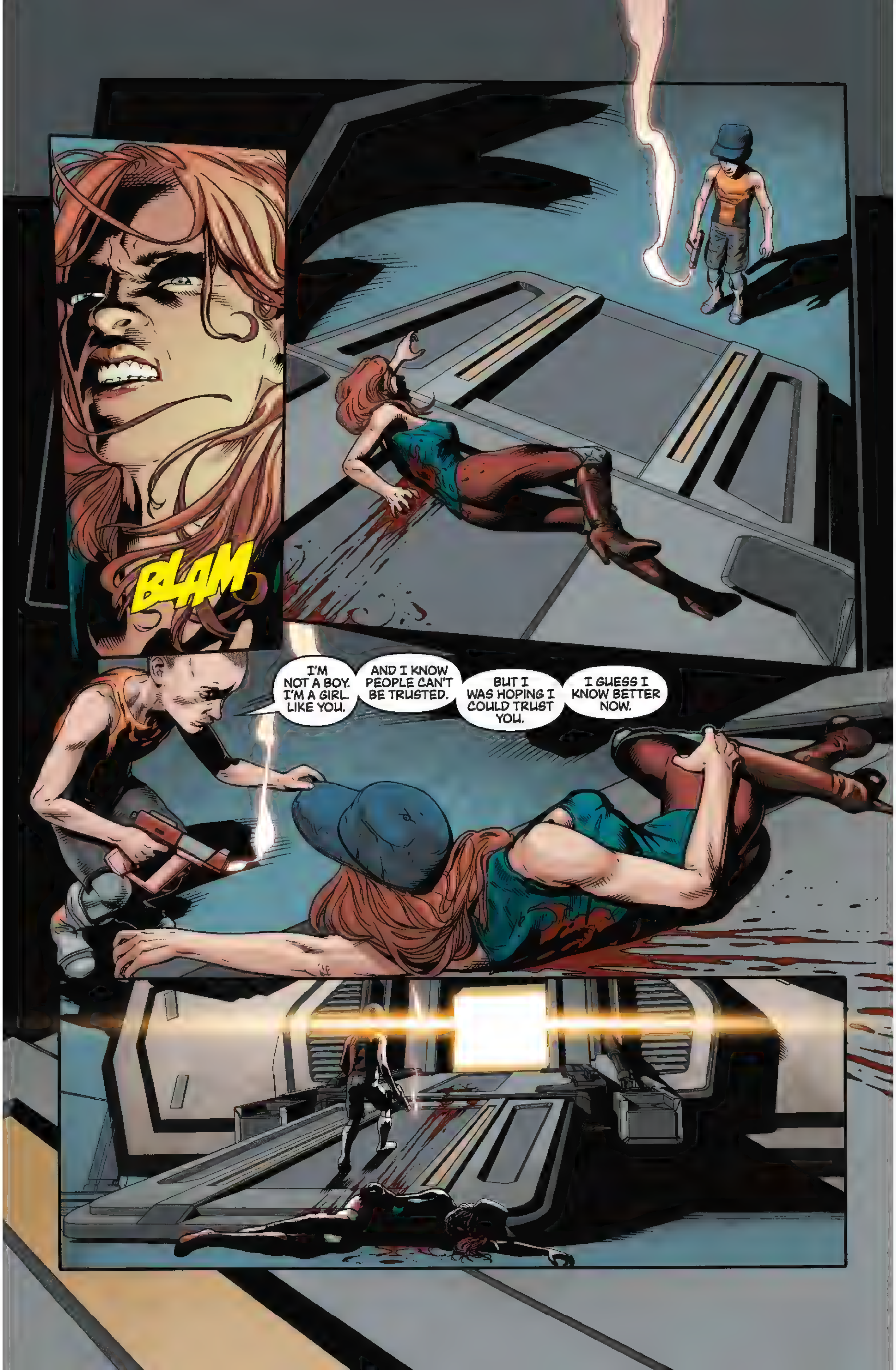

YOU CAN'T KILL HIM...
SOMETIMES, BOY--
--THE KINDEST THING YOU CAN DO IS END IT.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
JUST TELL ME WHAT I NEED TO KNOW, AND THIS CAN END.
HE'S...GONE... HEADED BACK TO EARTH.
CAN WE GO NOW?
NOW WE CAN GO.

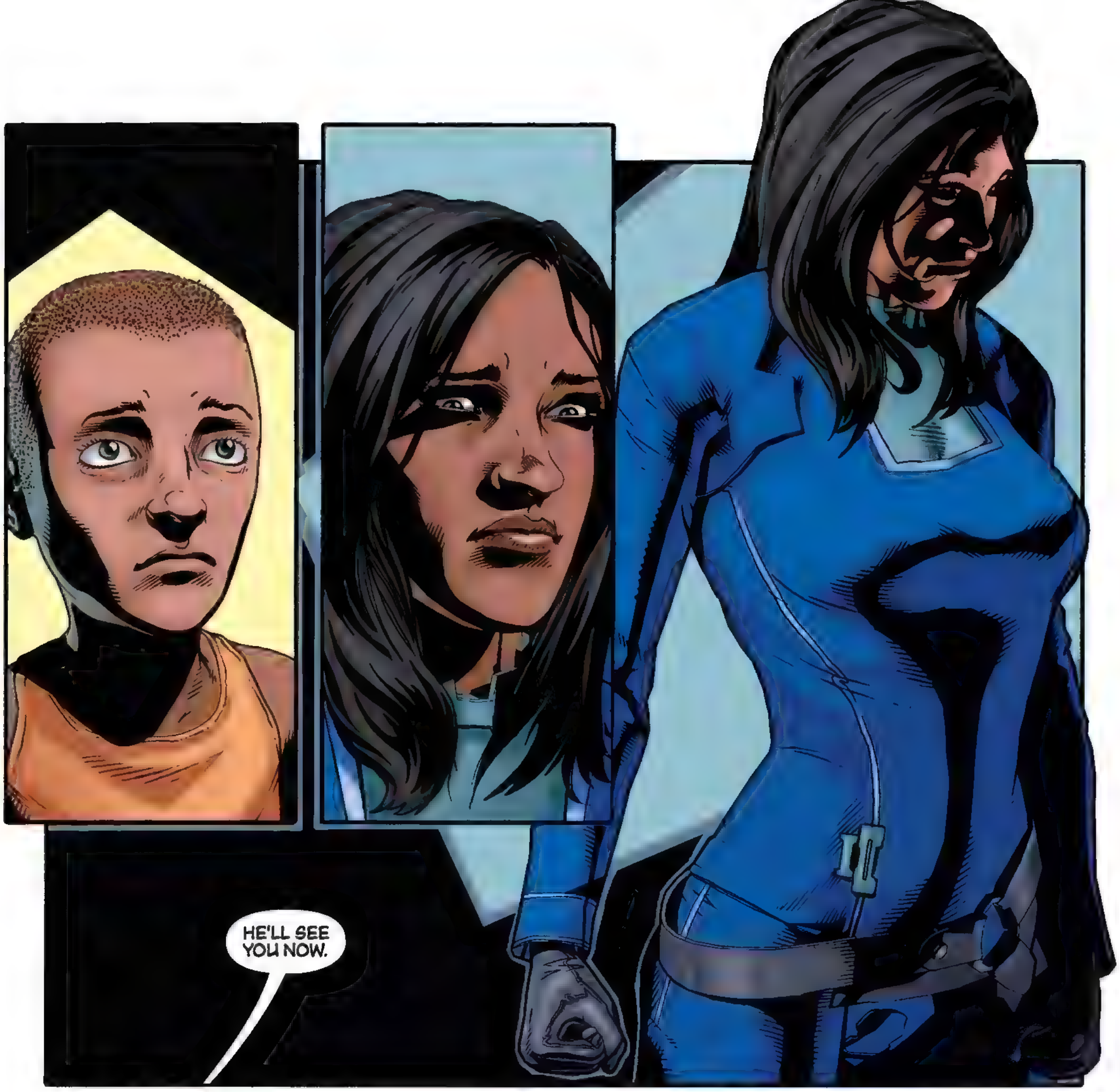

OOMFPH.
CRACK
I SAVED YOUR LIFE, YOU KNOW.
DIDN'T ASK FOR YOUR HELP.
STILL. YOU COULD TRY TO BE A LITTLE NICER.
YOU COULD AT LEAST WALK A LITTLE SLOWER.
I'D RATHER SHOOT MYSELF THAN SPEND A MINUTE LONGER HERE THAN I HAVE TO.
SO YOU'RE LEAVING?

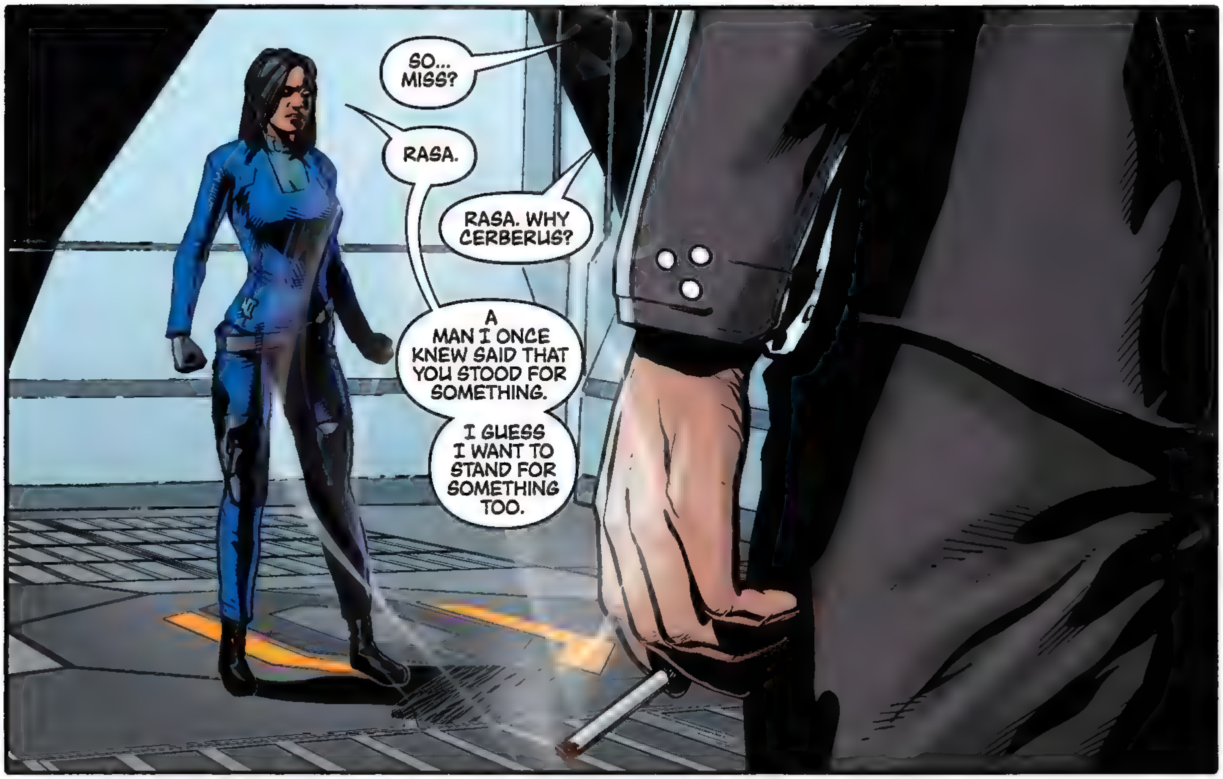

YES. I AM.
I'M INVESTIGATING A BREAK-IN AND MURDER AT THE ROTH RESIDENCE. WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE MR. ROTH MIGHT BE IN DANGER.
I NEED TO KNOW WHETHER HE'S LEFT THE STATION, AND IF SO, WHERE TO.
AHHH...
QUICKLY!
IT APPEARS MR. ROTH LEFT... YESTERDAY.
WHERE TO?
HM. THAT'S ODD.
NO DESTINATION SPECIFIED.
I CAN CALL THE MAIN OFFICE...
SEE IF THEY... HAVE...

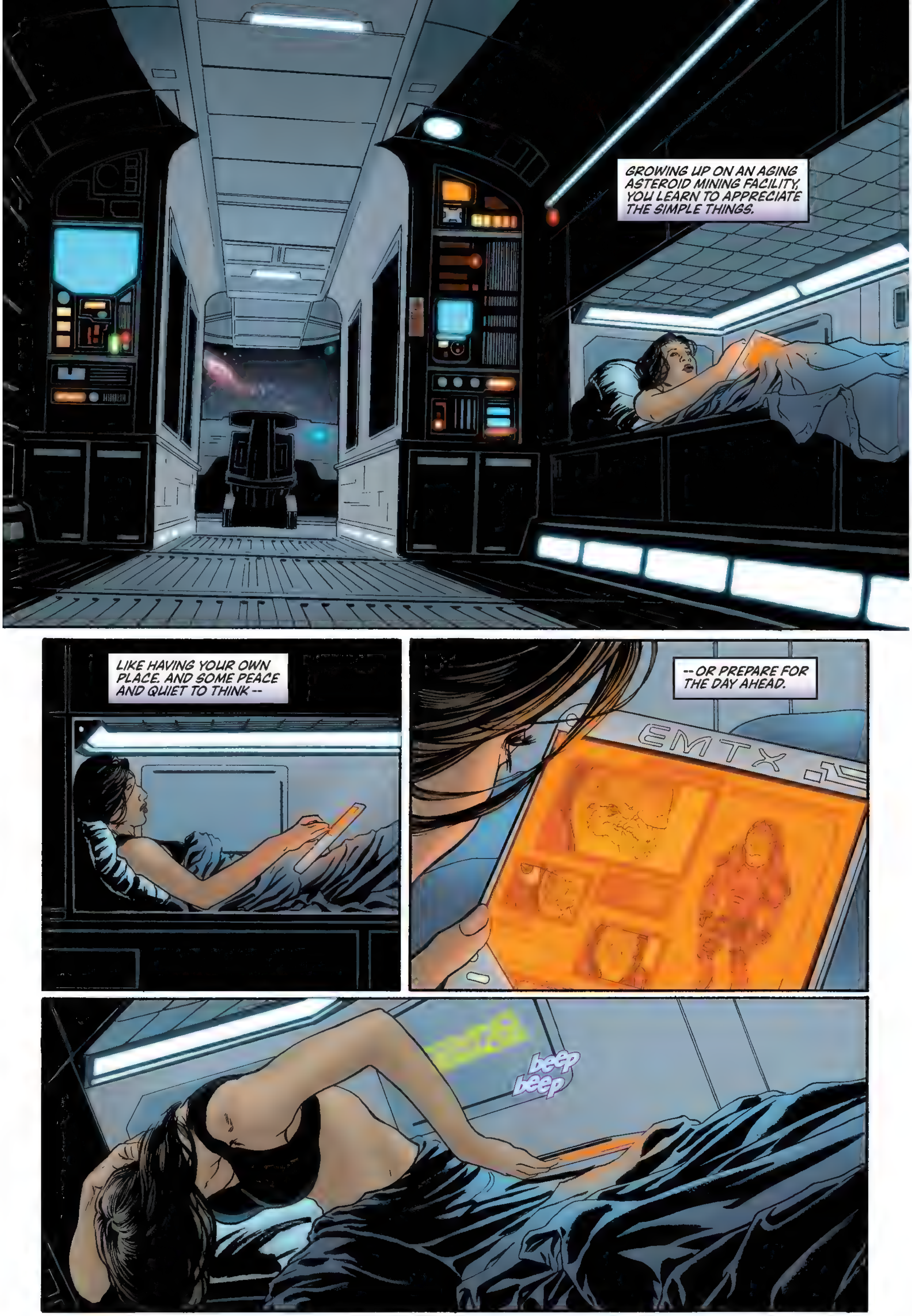

ACCESS GRANTED.
WELCOME BACK, MISS BROOKS.
IS THAT YOUR NAME? BROOKS?
YOU STILL HERE?
I'M COMING WITH YOU.
THE HELL YOU ARE.
BUT...
NO.
I'M NOT GOING TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOU.
I CAN LOOK AFTER MYSELF.
EXACTLY. YOU DON'T NEED ME.
AND I SURE AS HELL DON'T NEED YOU.
THERE'S NOTHING FOR ME HERE. I HAVE NO FAMILY. NO FUTURE.
JUST TAKE ME WITH YOU FOR NOW. YOU CAN DROP ME OFF.
ANYWHERE. I DON'T CARE, AS LONG AS IT'S NOT HERE.

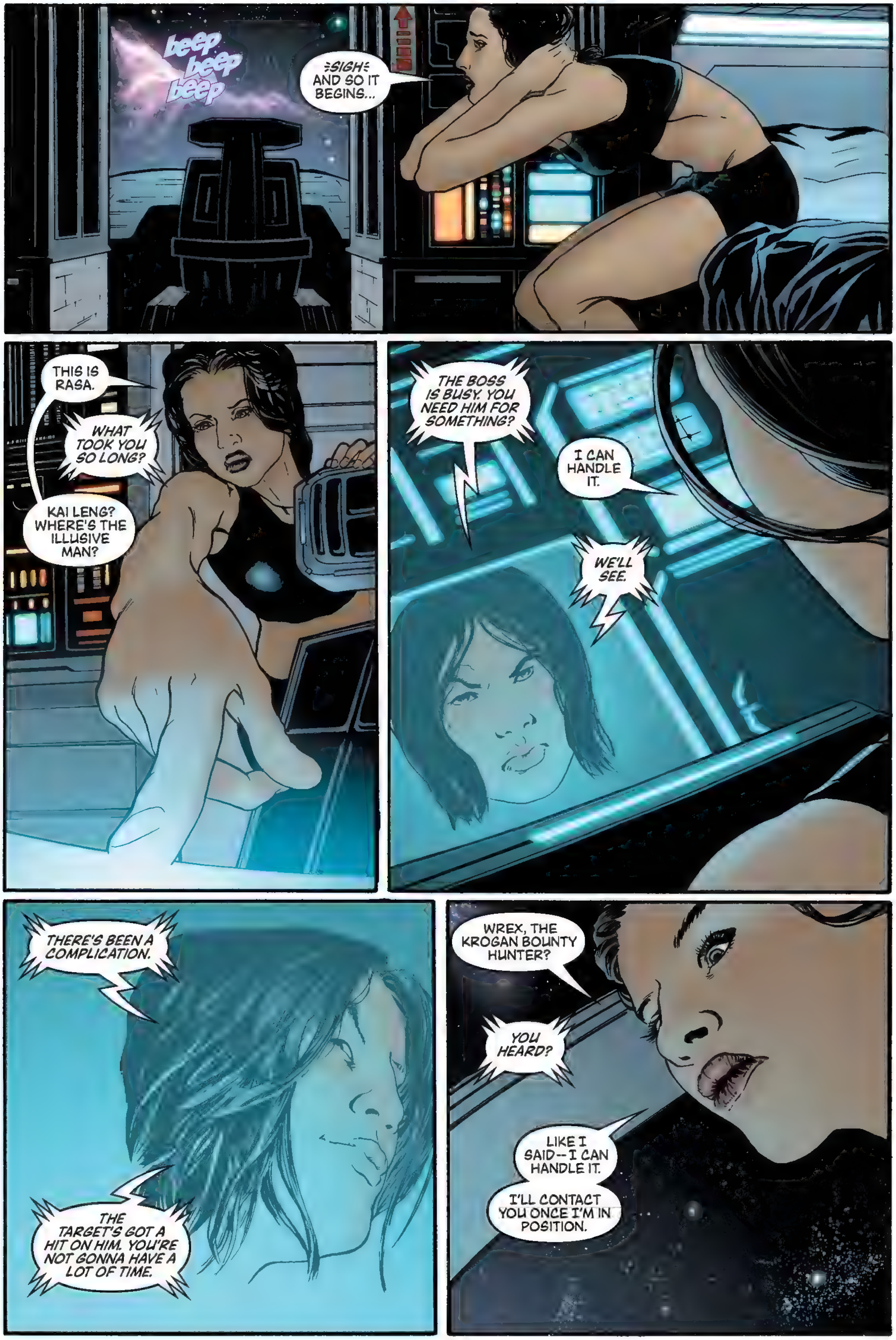

YOU KNOW WHY I WORK ALONE?
YOU DON'T LIKE PEOPLE?
YEAH. BUT DO YOU KNOW WHY?
THEY CAN'T BE TRUSTED.
YOU'RE NO DIFFERENT. IF SOMEONE LIKE THAT MAN I FOUGHT TODAY CAUGHT YOU--
--HE'D FIND A WAY TO MAKE YOU BETRAY ME.
THAT'S JUST LIFE.
AND THAT'S WHY IT'S ALWAYS BEST TO TRUST NOBODY BUT YOURSELF.
I JUST WANT A RIDE. THAT'S ALL I'M ASKING.
YOU FOUND A WAY TO SURVIVE HERE ALONE. YOU WERE EVEN ABLE TO TRACK ME TO ROTH'S PLACE AND SNEAK IN.
SOMEHOW, I THINK YOU CAN MANAGE TO FIND A WAY OFF THIS ROCK.
WITHOUT ME.
GOOD LUCK, BOY.

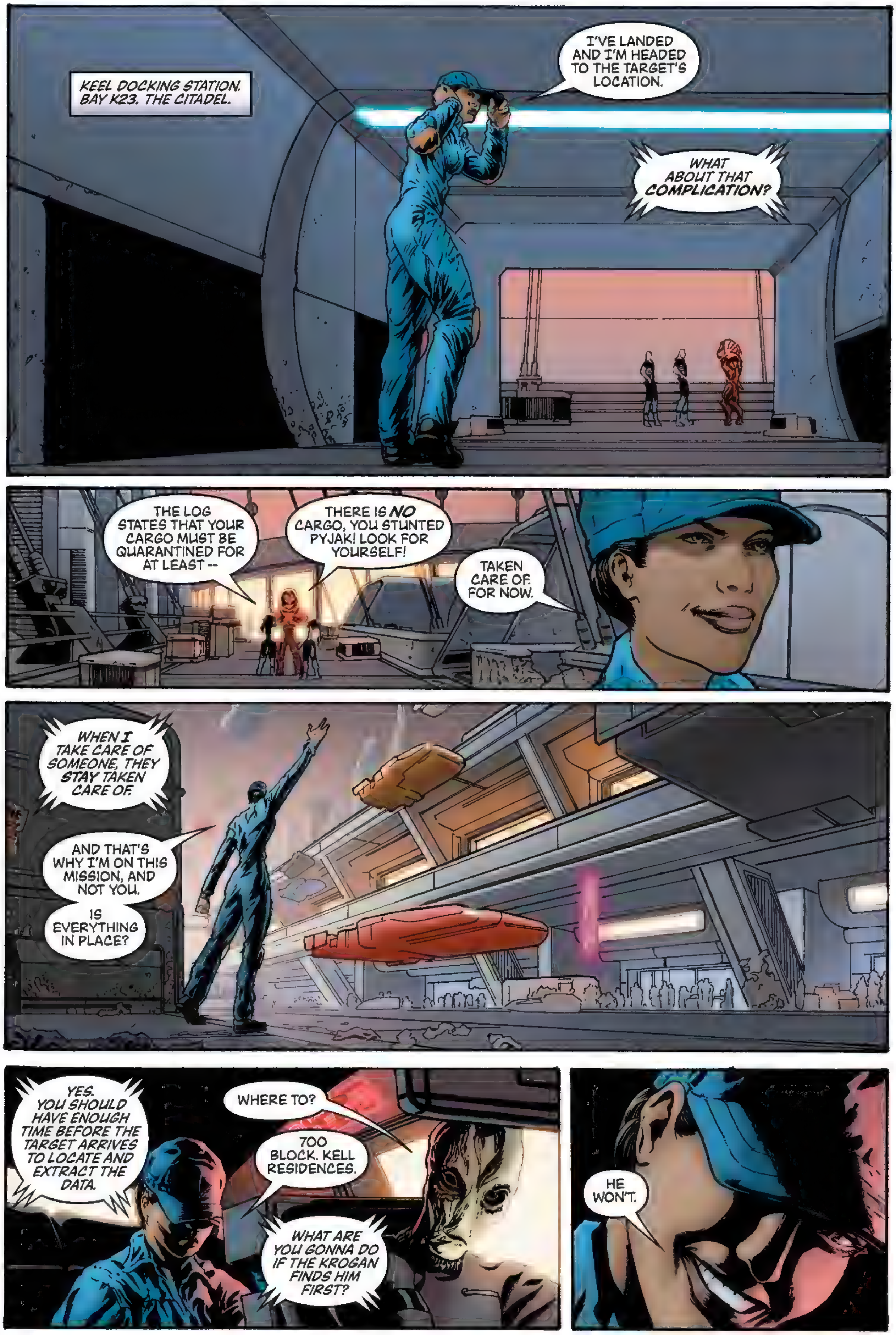

BLAM
I'M NOT A BOY. I'M A GIRL. LIKE YOU.
AND I KNOW PEOPLE CAN'T BE TRUSTED.
BUT I WAS HOPING I COULD TRUST YOU.
I GUESS I KNOW BETTER NOW.

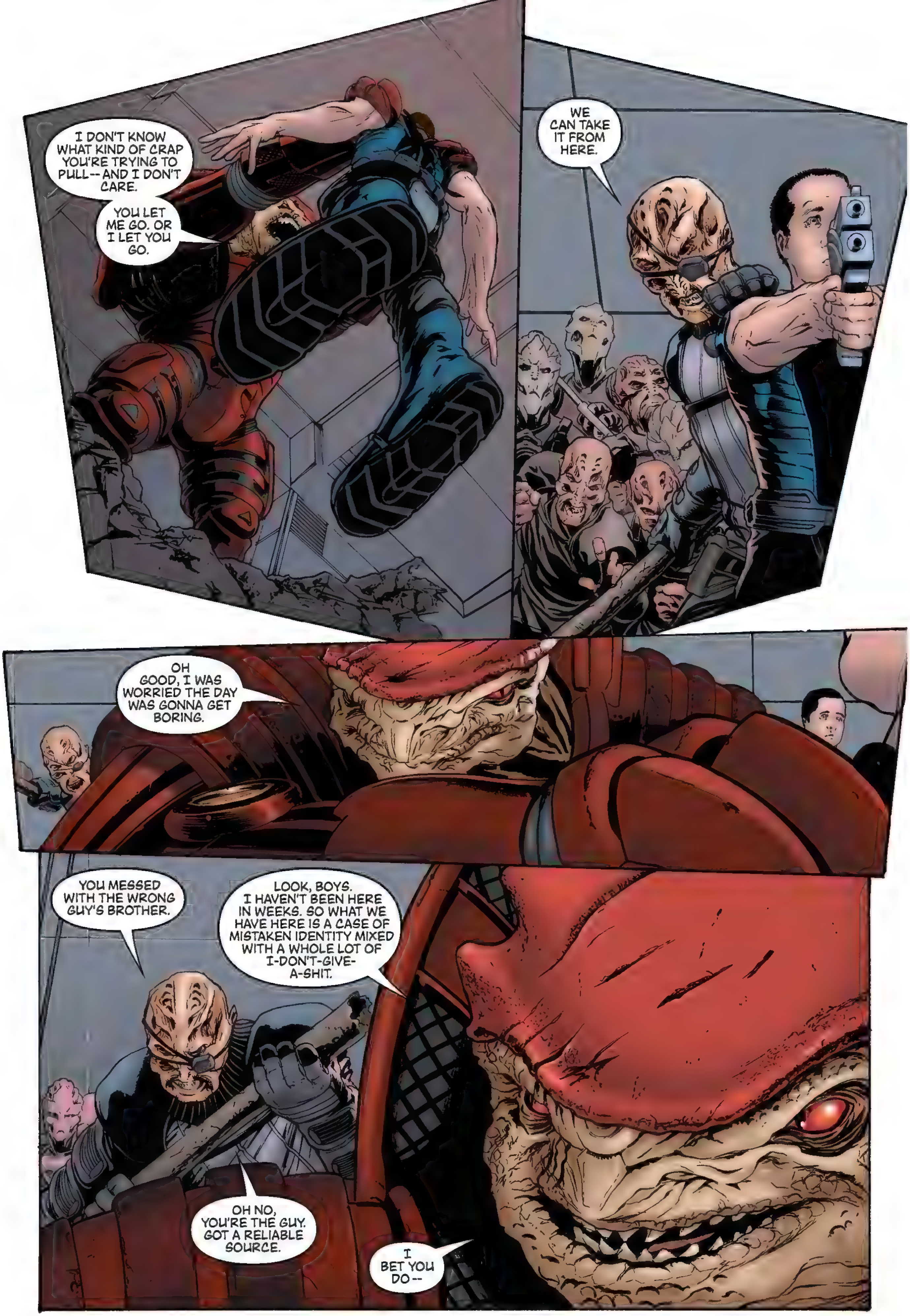

HE'LL SEE YOU NOW.

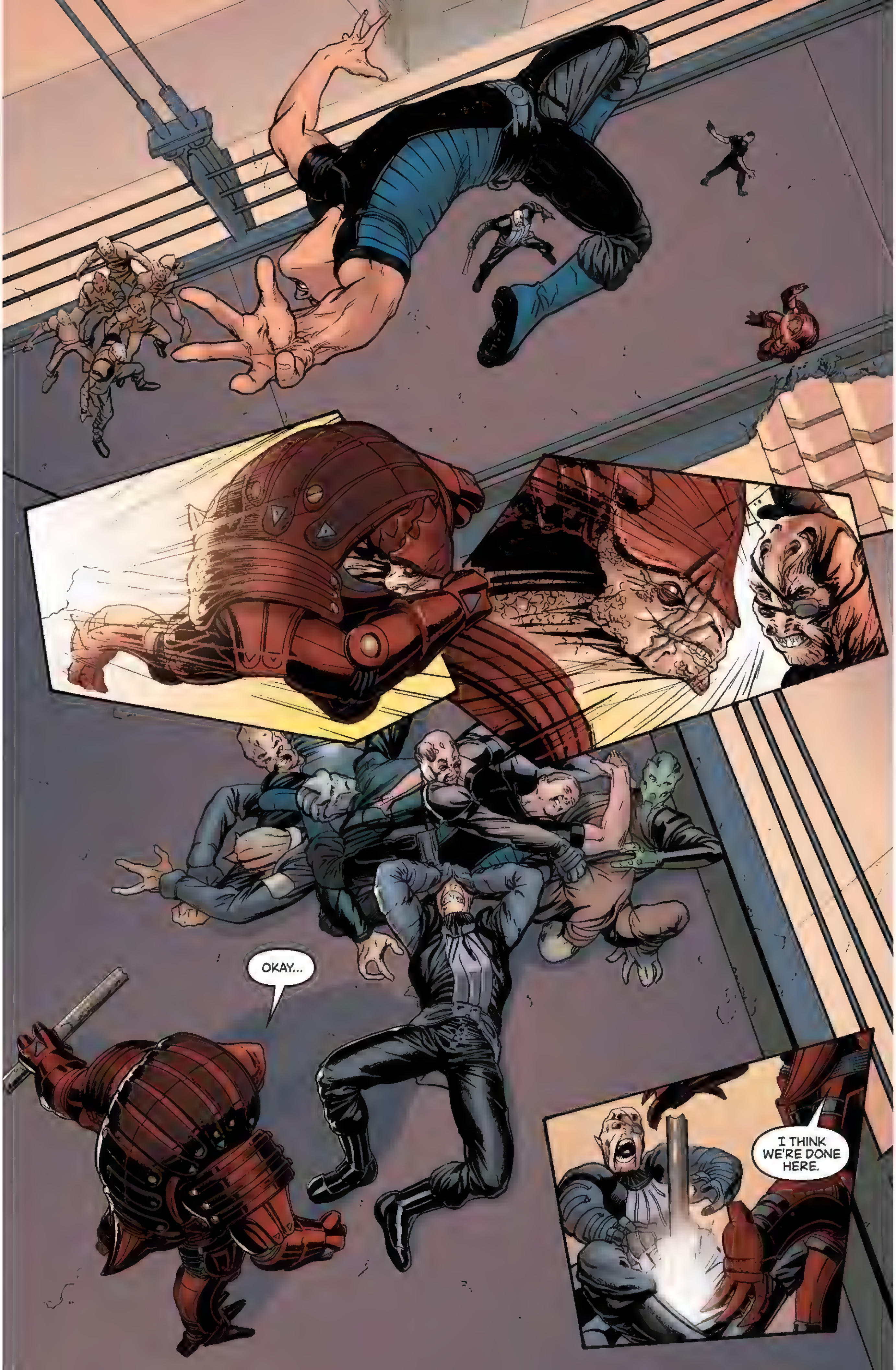

SO... MISS?
RASA.
RASA. WHY CERBERUS?
A MAN I ONCE KNEW SAID THAT YOU STOOD FOR SOMETHING.
I GUESS I WANT TO STAND FOR SOMETHING TOO.

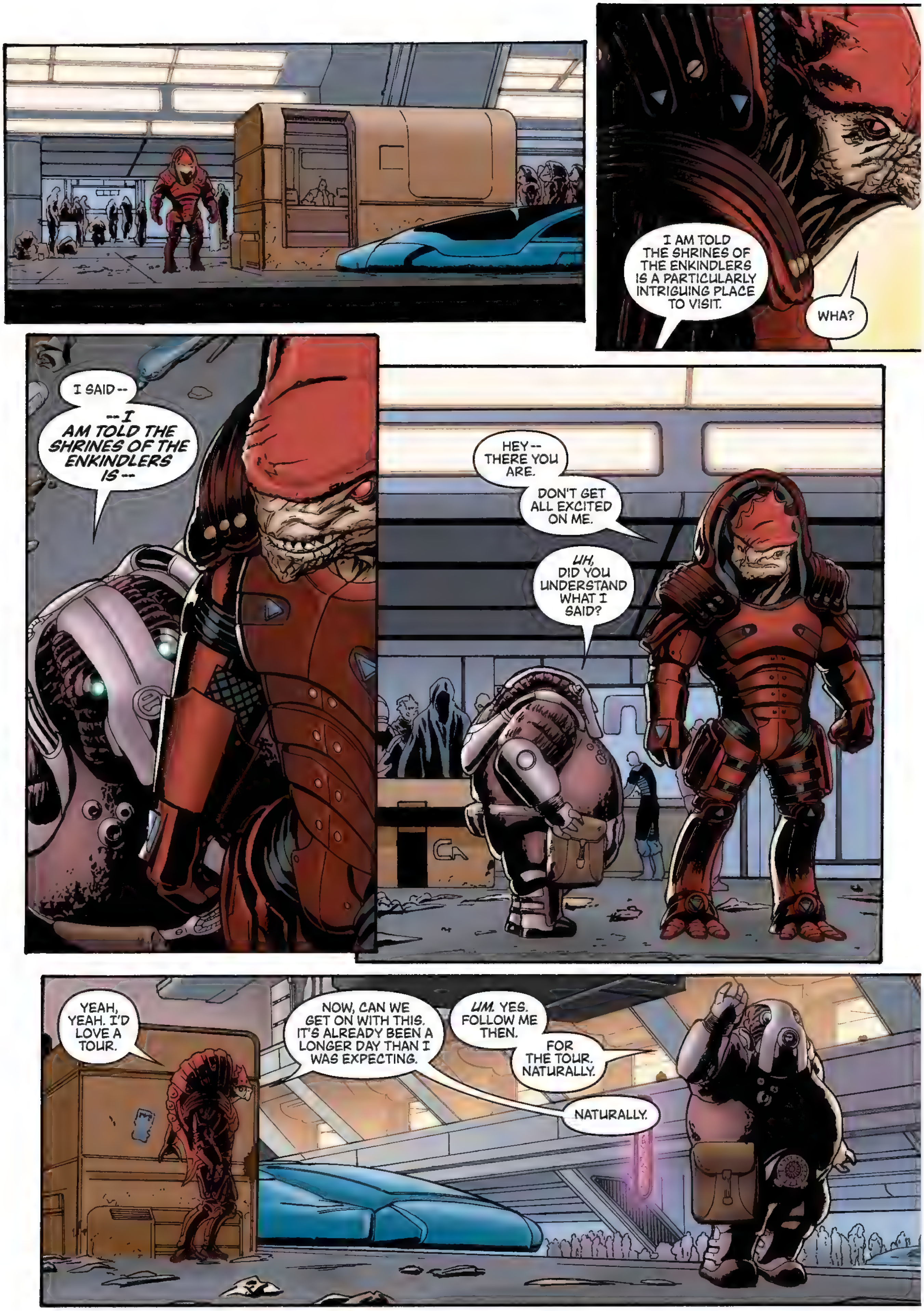

GROWING UP ON AN AGING ASTEROID MINING FACILITY, YOU LEARN TO APPRECIATE THE SIMPLE THINGS.
LIKE HAVING YOUR OWN PLACE. AND SOME PEACE AND QUIET TO THINK --
-- OR PREPARE FOR THE DAY AHEAD.
EMTX
beep beep

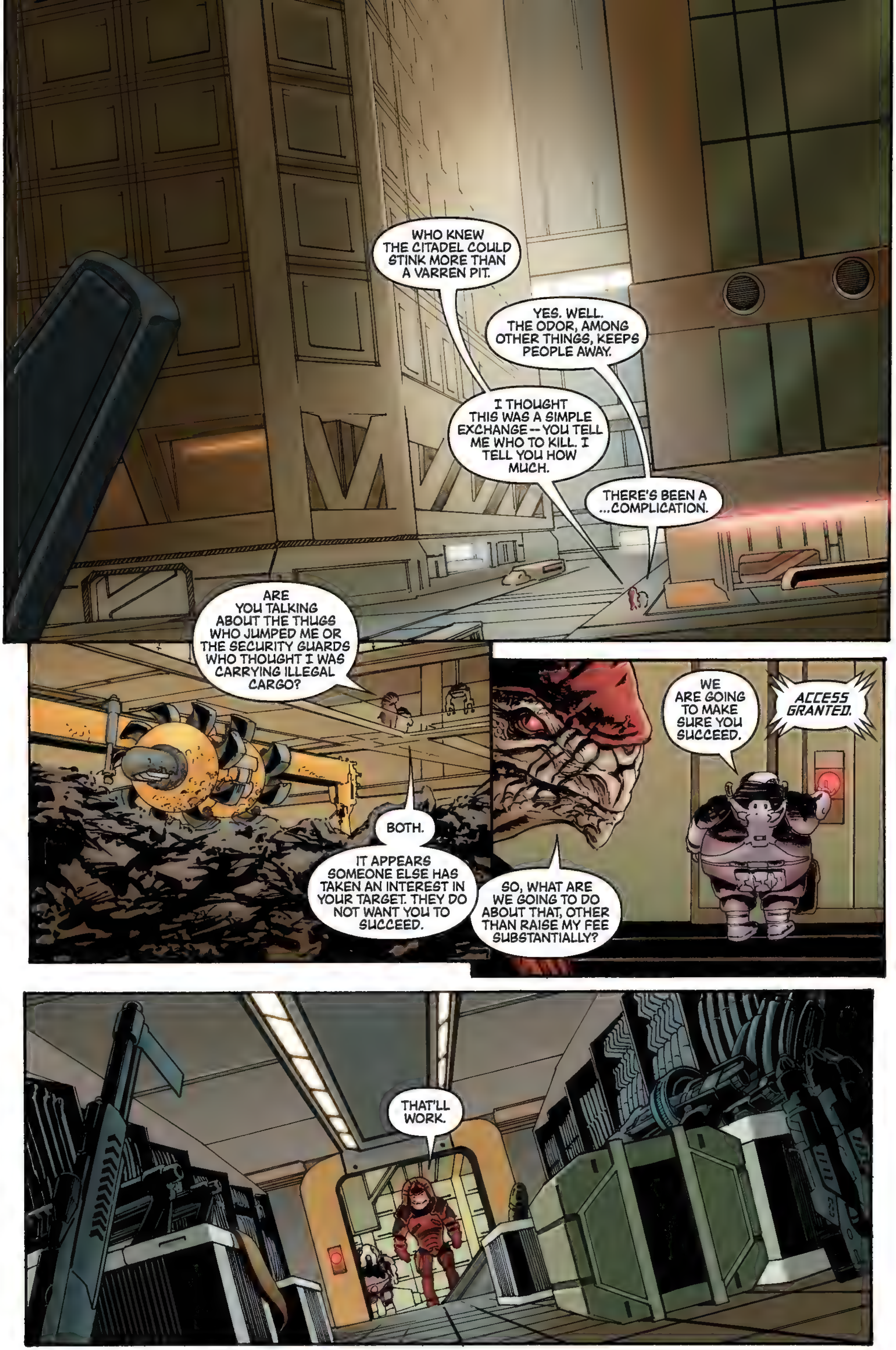

beep beep beep
≈SIGH≈ AND SO IT BEGINS...
THIS IS RASA.
WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?
KAI LENG? WHERE'S THE ILLUSIVE MAN?
THE BOSS IS BUSY. YOU NEED HIM FOR SOMETHING?
I CAN HANDLE IT.
WE'LL SEE.
THERE'S BEEN A COMPLICATION.
THE TARGET'S GOT A HIT ON HIM. YOU'RE NOT GONNA HAVE A LOT OF TIME.
WREX, THE KROGAN BOUNTY HUNTER?
YOU HEARD?
LIKE I SAID--I CAN HANDLE IT.
I'LL CONTACT YOU ONCE I'M IN POSITION.

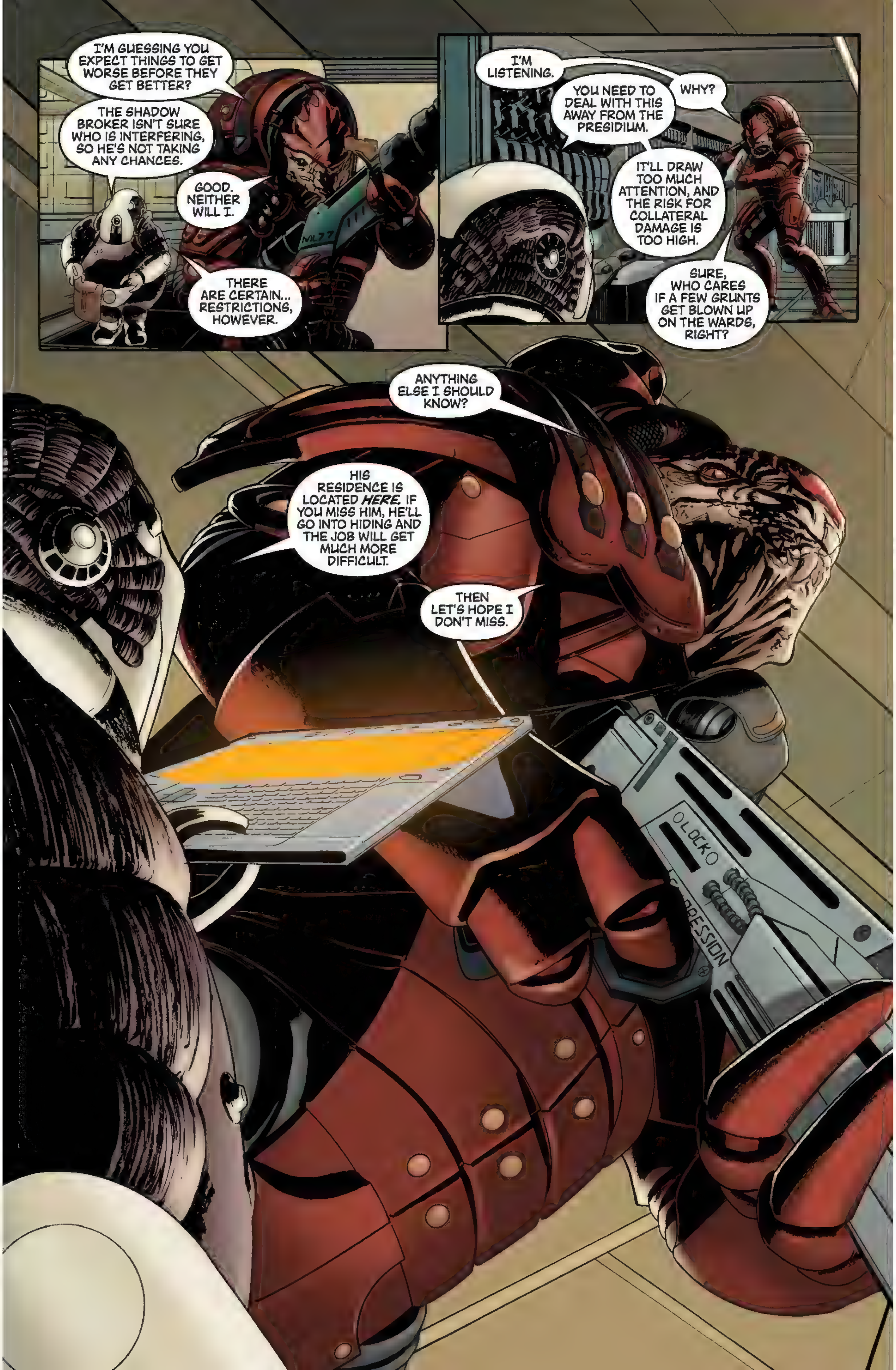

KEEL DOCKING STATION. BAY K23. THE CITADEL.
I'VE LANDED AND I'M HEADED TO THE TARGET'S LOCATION.
WHAT ABOUT THAT COMPLICATION?
THE LOG STATES THAT YOUR CARGO MUST BE QUARANTINED FOR AT LEAST --
THERE IS NO CARGO, YOU STUNTED PYJAK! LOOK FOR YOURSELF!
TAKEN CARE OF. FOR NOW.
WHEN I TAKE CARE OF SOMEONE, THEY STAY TAKEN CARE OF.
AND THAT'S WHY I'M ON THIS MISSION, AND NOT YOU.
IS EVERYTHING IN PLACE?
YES. YOU SHOULD HAVE ENOUGH TIME BEFORE THE TARGET ARRIVES TO LOCATE AND EXTRACT THE DATA.
WHERE TO?
700 BLOCK. KELL RESIDENCES.
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO IF THE KROGAN FINDS HIM FIRST?
HE WON'T.

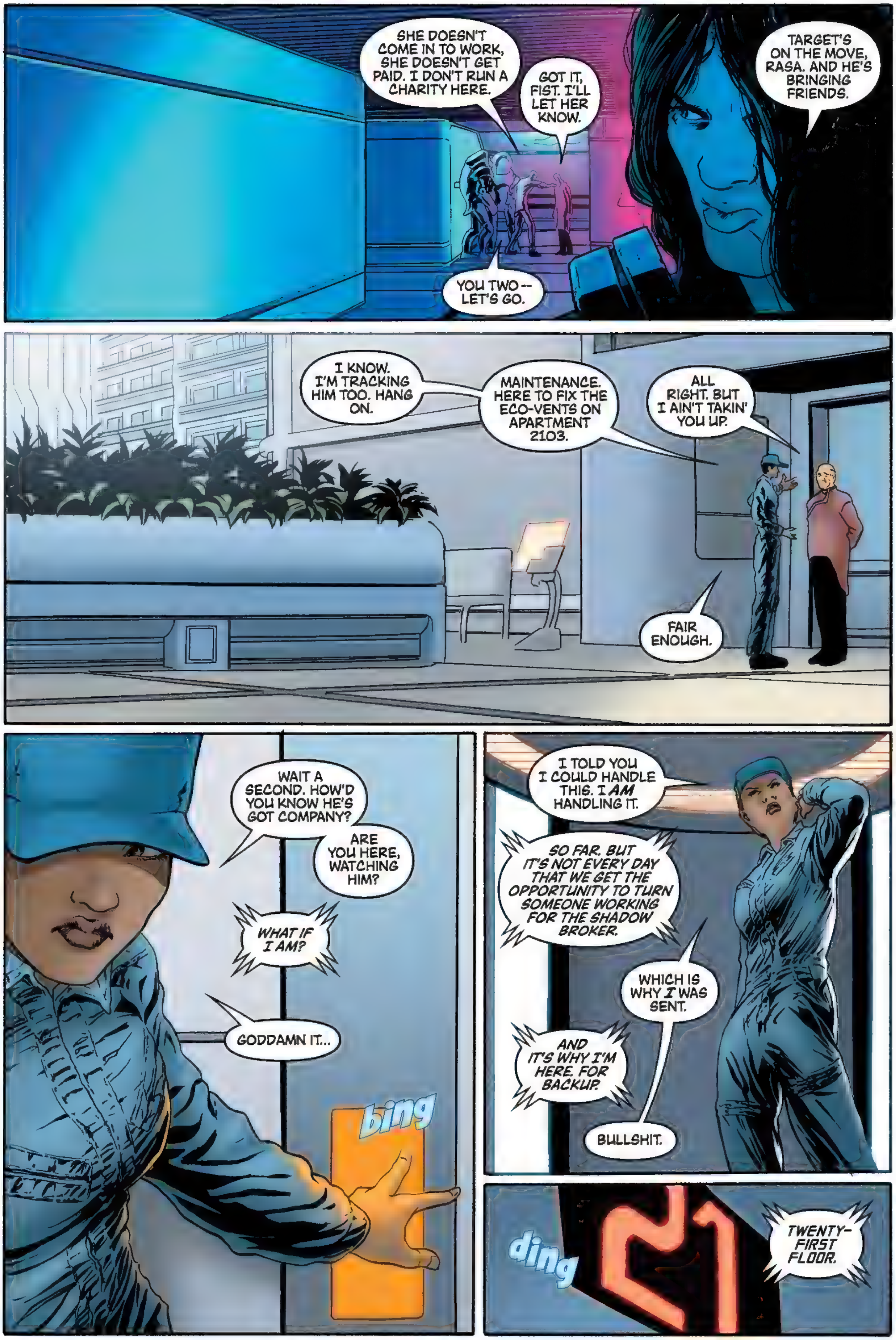

I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF CRAP YOU'RE TRYING TO PULL-- AND I DON'T CARE.
YOU LET ME GO. OR I LET YOU GO.
WE CAN TAKE IT FROM HERE.
OH GOOD, I WAS WORRIED THE DAY WAS GONNA GET BORING.
YOU MESSED WITH THE WRONG GUY'S BROTHER.
LOOK, BOYS. I HAVEN'T BEEN HERE IN WEEKS. SO WHAT WE HAVE HERE IS A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY MIXED WITH A WHOLE LOT OF I-DON'T-GIVE-A-SHIT.
OH NO, YOU'RE THE GUY. GOT A RELIABLE SOURCE.
I BET YOU DO --

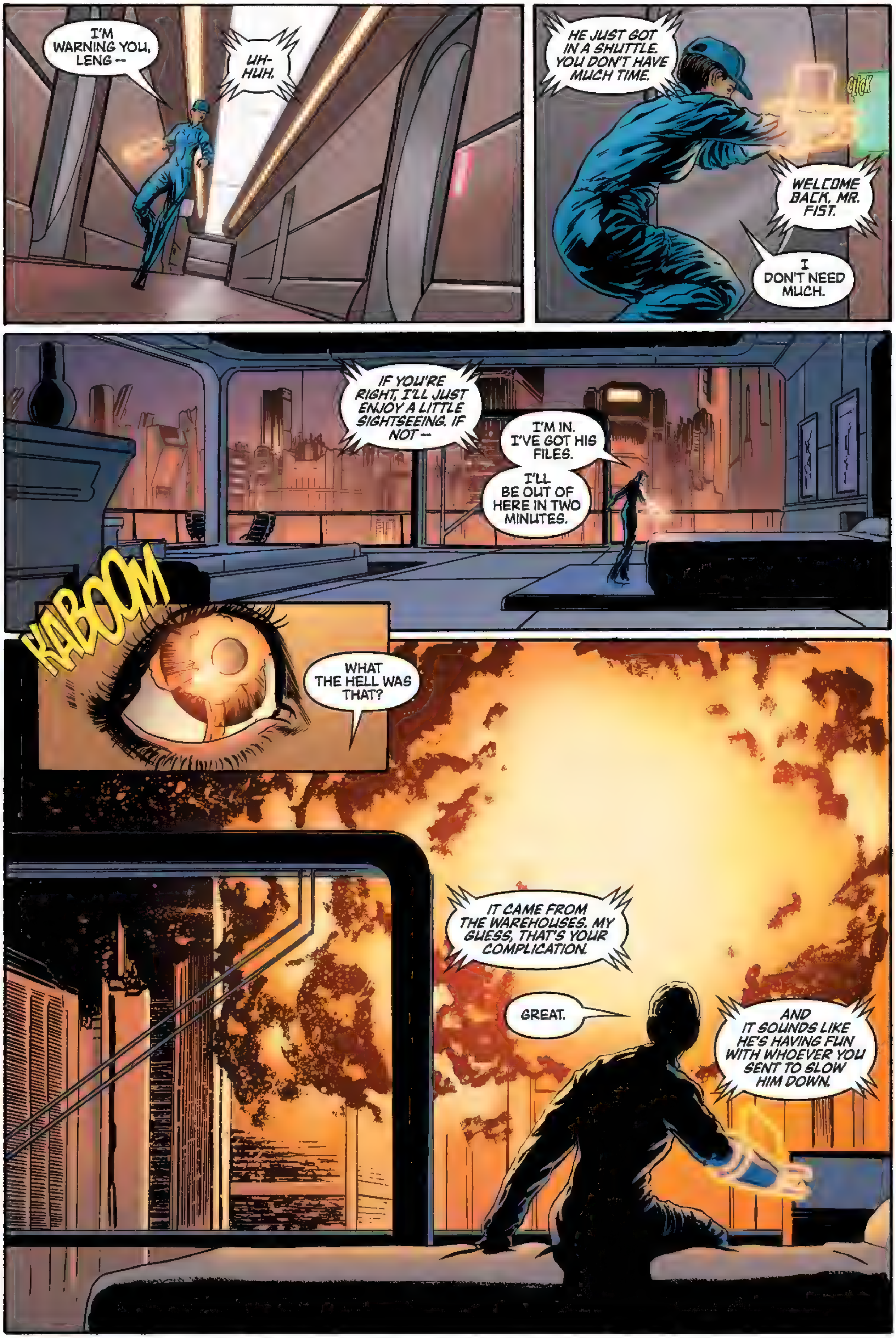

OKAY...
I THINK WE'RE DONE HERE.

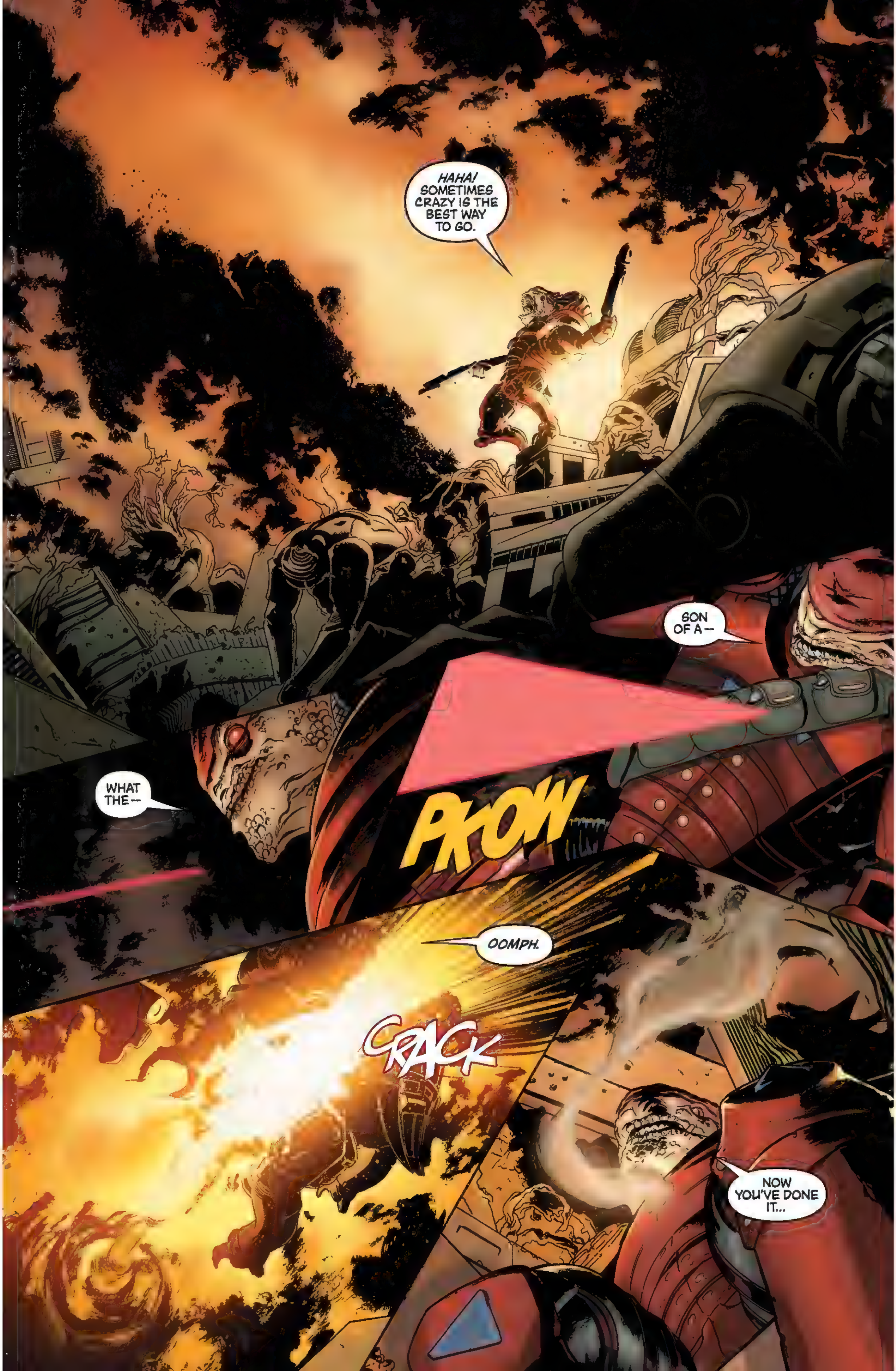

I AM TOLD THE SHRINES OF THE ENKINDLERS IS A PARTICULARLY INTRIGUING PLACE TO VISIT.
WHA?
I SAID --
-- *I AM TOLD THE SHRINES OF THE ENKINDLERS IS* --
HEY -- THERE YOU ARE.
DON'T GET ALL EXCITED ON ME.
UH, DID YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I SAID?
YEAH, YEAH. I'D LOVE A TOUR.
NOW, CAN WE GET ON WITH THIS. IT'S ALREADY BEEN A LONGER DAY THAN I WAS EXPECTING.
UM. YES. FOLLOW ME THEN.
FOR THE TOUR. NATURALLY.
NATURALLY.

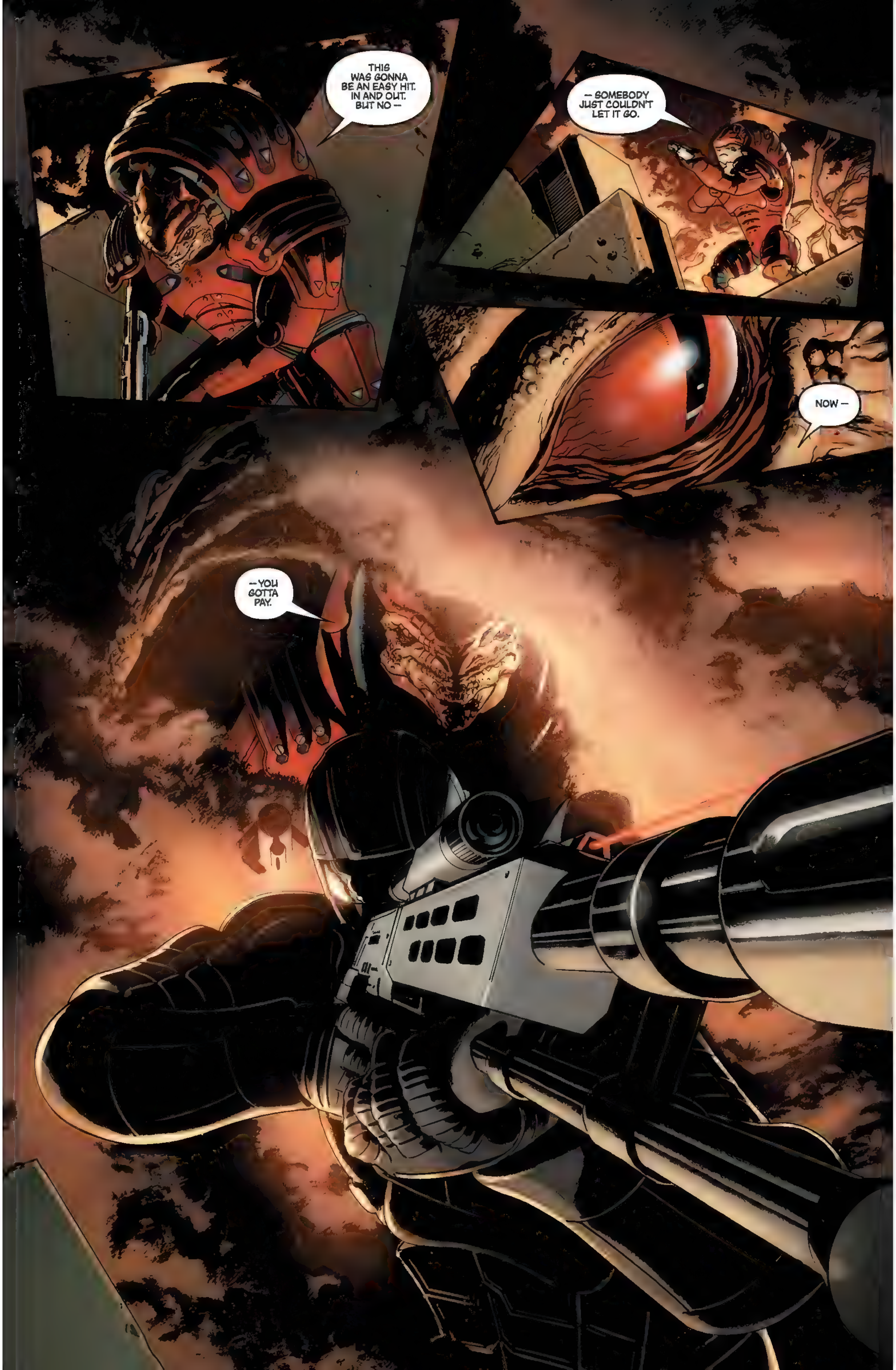

WHO KNEW THE CITADEL COULD STINK MORE THAN A VARREN PIT.
YES. WELL. THE ODOR, AMONG OTHER THINGS, KEEPS PEOPLE AWAY.
I THOUGHT THIS WAS A SIMPLE EXCHANGE -- YOU TELL ME WHO TO KILL. I TELL YOU HOW MUCH.
THERE'S BEEN A ...COMPLICATION.
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT THE THUGS WHO JUMPED ME OR THE SECURITY GUARDS WHO THOUGHT I WAS CARRYING ILLEGAL CARGO?
BOTH.
IT APPEARS SOMEONE ELSE HAS TAKEN AN INTEREST IN YOUR TARGET. THEY DO NOT WANT YOU TO SUCCEED.
SO, WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT THAT, OTHER THAN RAISE MY FEE SUBSTANTIALLY?
WE ARE GOING TO MAKE SURE YOU SUCCEED.
ACCESS GRANTED.
THAT'LL WORK.

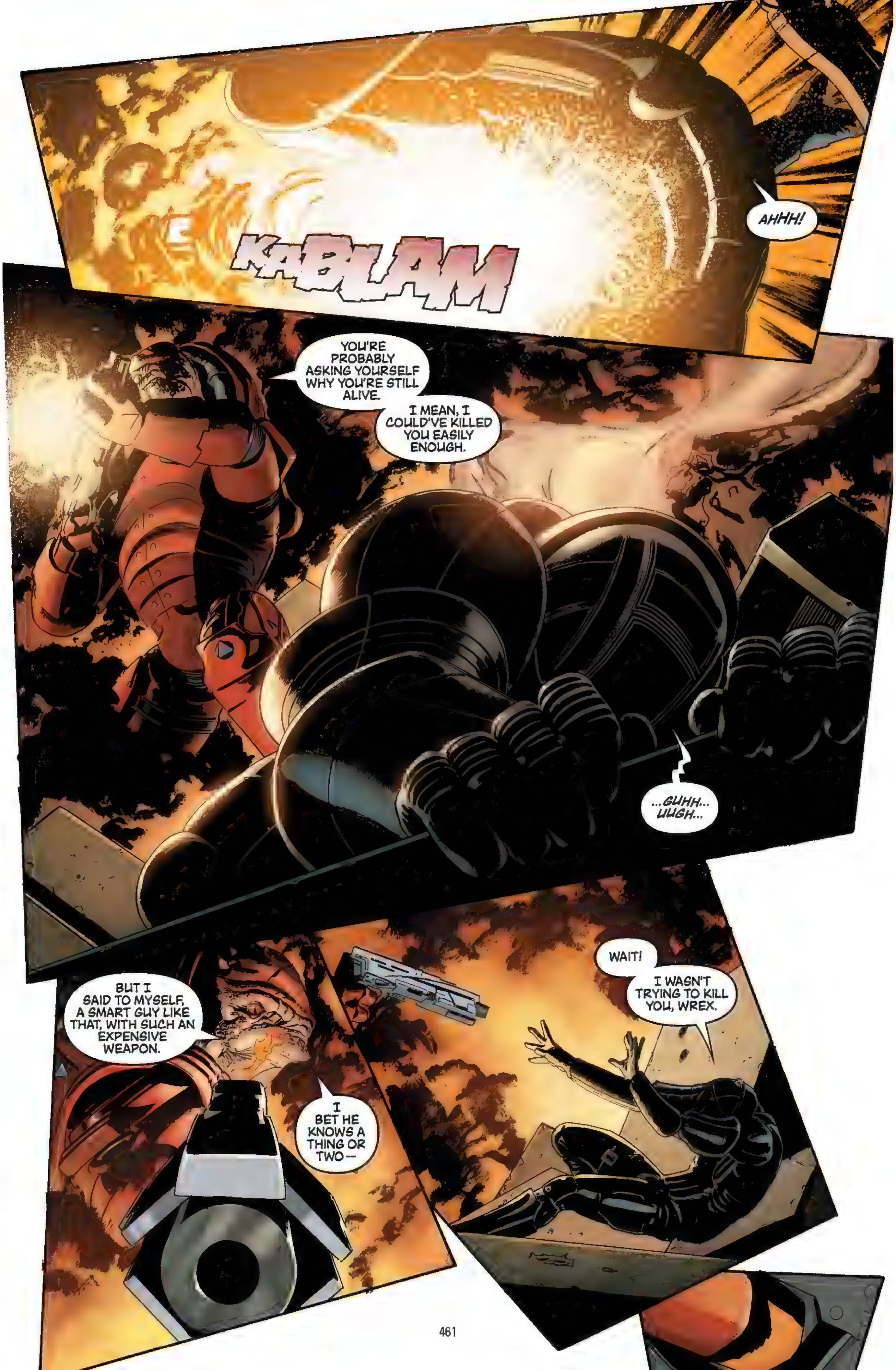

I'M GUESSING YOU EXPECT THINGS TO GET WORSE BEFORE THEY GET BETTER?
THE SHADOW BROKER ISN'T SURE WHO IS INTERFERING, SO HE'S NOT TAKING ANY CHANCES.
GOOD. NEITHER WILL I.
THERE ARE CERTAIN... RESTRICTIONS, HOWEVER.
I'M LISTENING.
YOU NEED TO DEAL WITH THIS AWAY FROM THE PRESIDIUM.
WHY?
IT'LL DRAW TOO MUCH ATTENTION, AND THE RISK FOR COLLATERAL DAMAGE IS TOO HIGH.
SURE, WHO CARES IF A FEW GRUNTS GET BLOWN UP ON THE WARDS, RIGHT?
ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD KNOW?
HIS RESIDENCE IS LOCATED *HERE.* IF YOU MISS HIM, HE'LL GO INTO HIDING AND THE JOB WILL GET MUCH MORE DIFFICULT.
THEN LET'S HOPE I DON'T MISS.

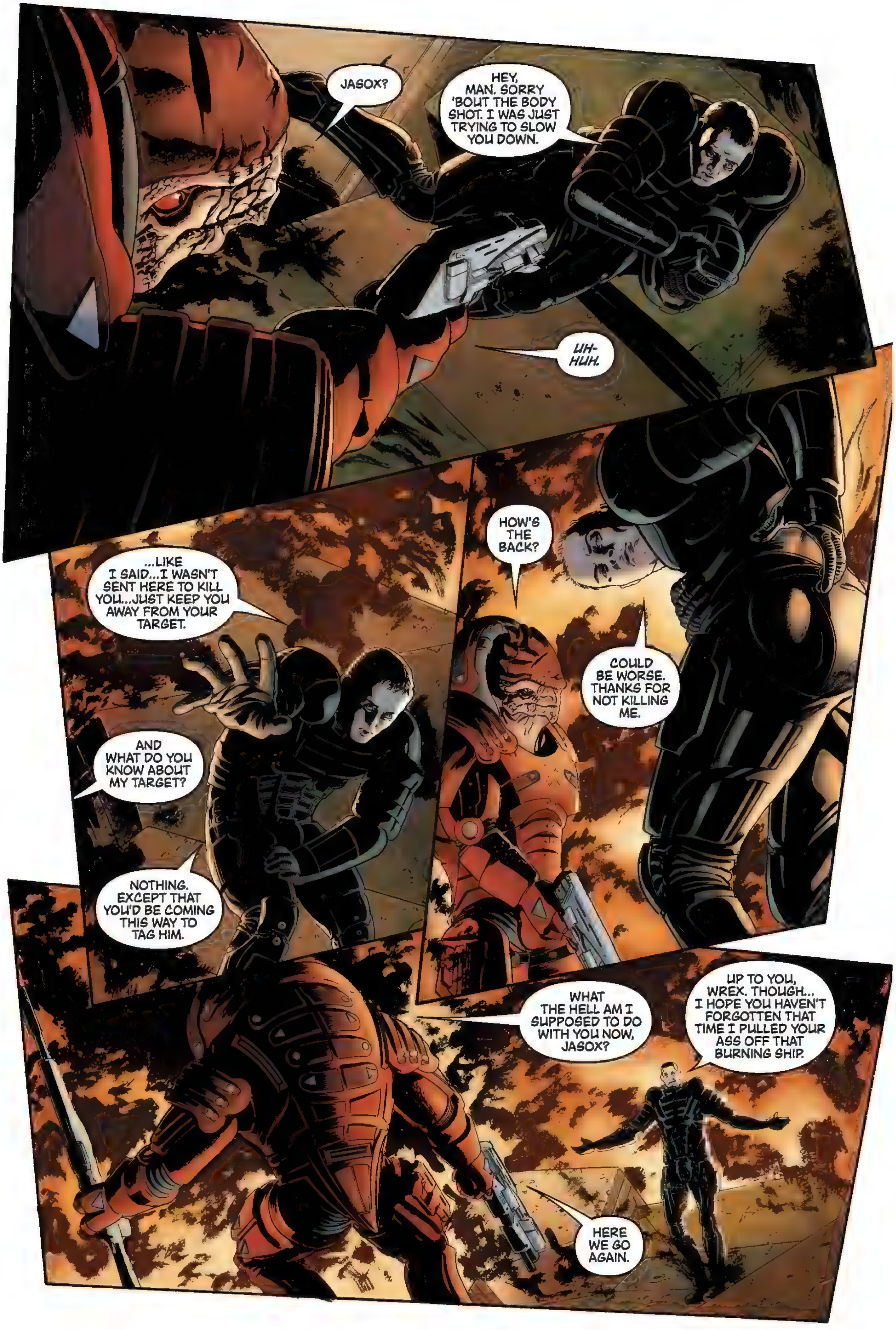

SHE DOESN'T COME IN TO WORK, SHE DOESN'T GET PAID. I DON'T RUN A CHARITY HERE.
GOT IT, FIST. I'LL LET HER KNOW.
TARGET'S ON THE MOVE, RASA. AND HE'S BRINGING FRIENDS.
YOU TWO -- LET'S GO.
I KNOW. I'M TRACKING HIM TOO. HANG ON.
MAINTENANCE. HERE TO FIX THE ECO-VENTS ON APARTMENT 2103.
ALL RIGHT. BUT I AIN'T TAKIN' YOU UP.
FAIR ENOUGH.
WAIT A SECOND. HOW'D YOU KNOW HE'S GOT COMPANY?
ARE YOU HERE, WATCHING HIM?
WHAT IF I AM?
GODDAMN IT...
bing
I TOLD YOU I COULD HANDLE THIS. I AM HANDLING IT.
SO FAR. BUT IT'S NOT EVERY DAY THAT WE GET THE OPPORTUNITY TO TURN SOMEONE WORKING FOR THE SHADOW BROKER.
WHICH IS WHY I WAS SENT.
AND IT'S WHY I'M HERE. FOR BACKUP.
BULLSHIT.
21
ding
TWENTY-FIRST FLOOR.

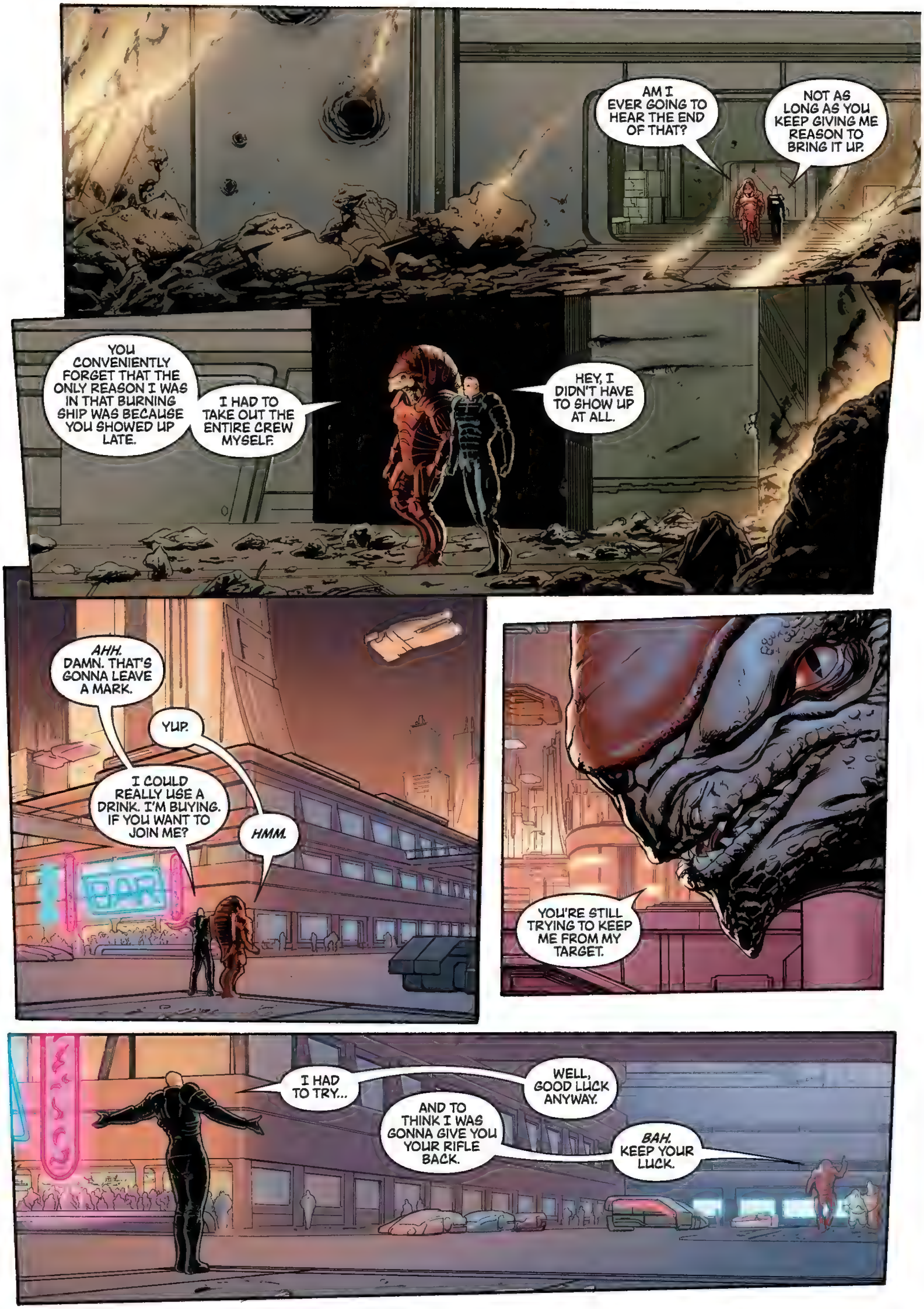

I'M WARNING YOU, LENG --
UH-HUH.
HE JUST GOT IN A SHUTTLE. YOU DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME.
CLICK
WELCOME BACK, MR. FIST.
I DON'T NEED MUCH.
IF YOU'RE RIGHT, I'LL JUST ENJOY A LITTLE SIGHTSEEING. IF NOT --
I'M IN. I'VE GOT HIS FILES.
I'LL BE OUT OF HERE IN TWO MINUTES.
KABOOM
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?
IT CAME FROM THE WAREHOUSES. MY GUESS, THAT'S YOUR COMPLICATION.
GREAT.
AND IT SOUNDS LIKE HE'S HAVING FUN WITH WHOEVER YOU SENT TO SLOW HIM DOWN.

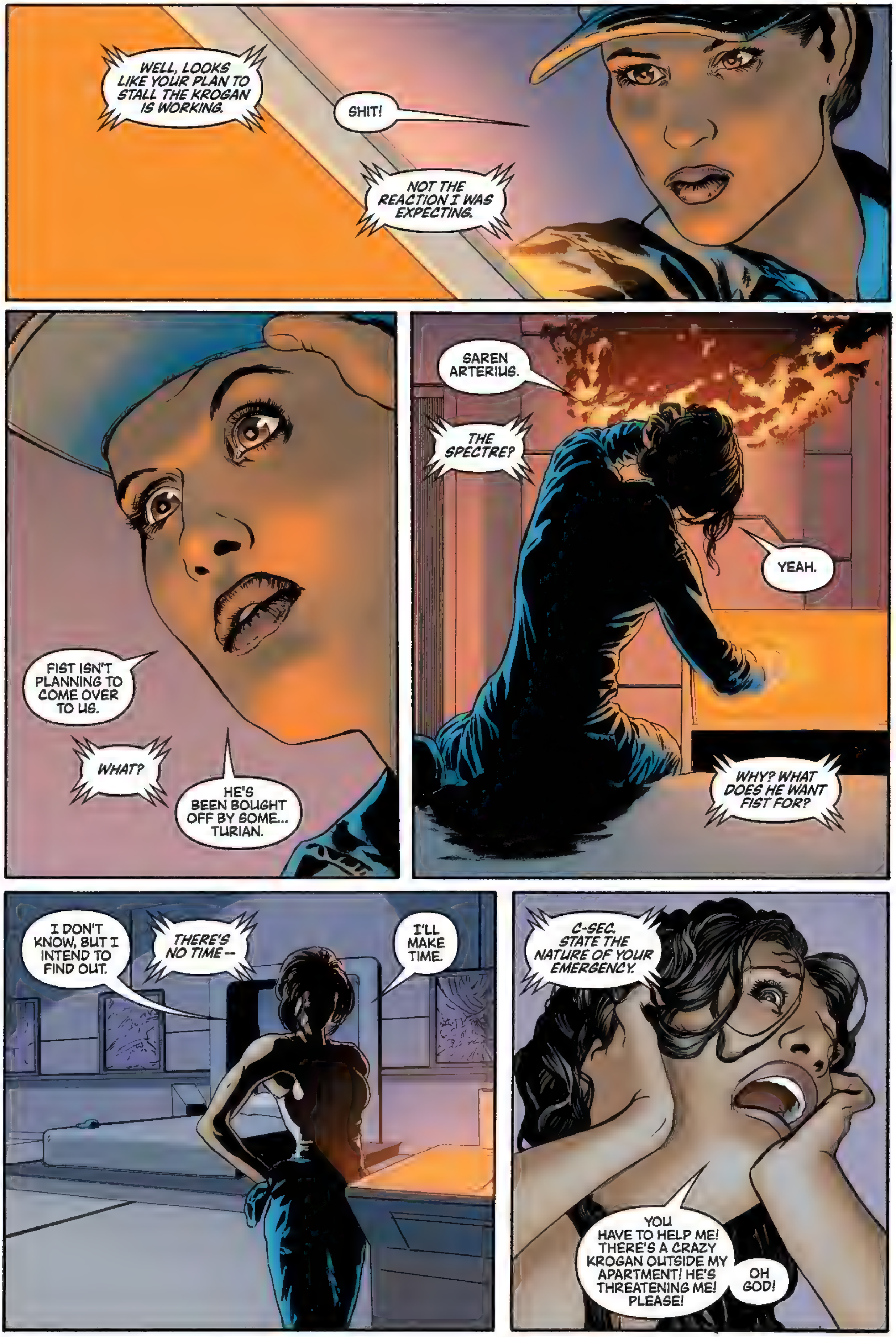

HAHA! SOMETIMES CRAZY IS THE BEST WAY TO GO.
SON OF A--
WHAT THE--
PKOW
OOMPH.
CRACK
NOW YOU'VE DONE IT...

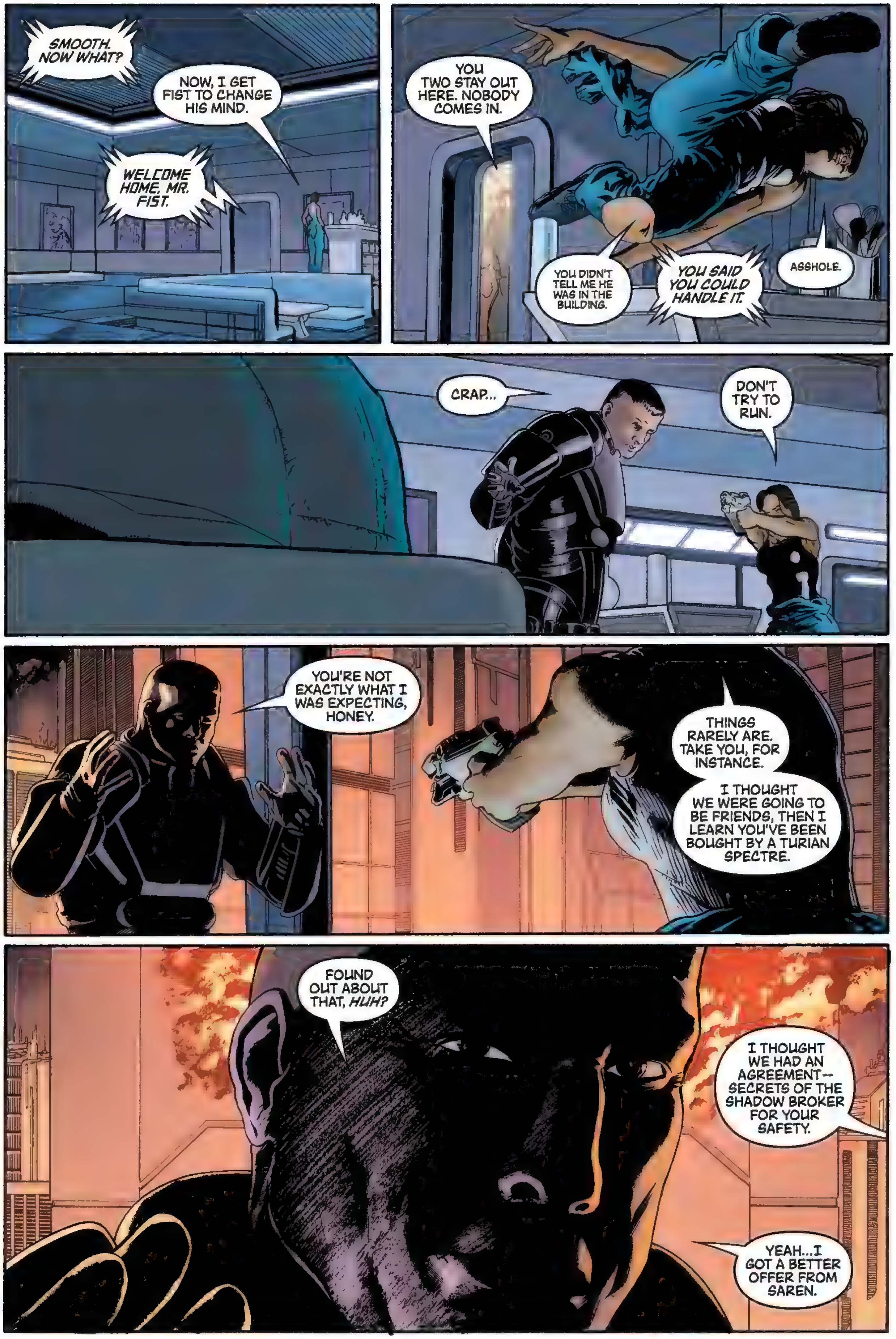

THIS WAS GONNA BE AN EASY HIT. IN AND OUT. BUT NO --
-- SOMEBODY JUST COULDN'T LET IT GO.
NOW --
-- YOU GOTTA PAY.

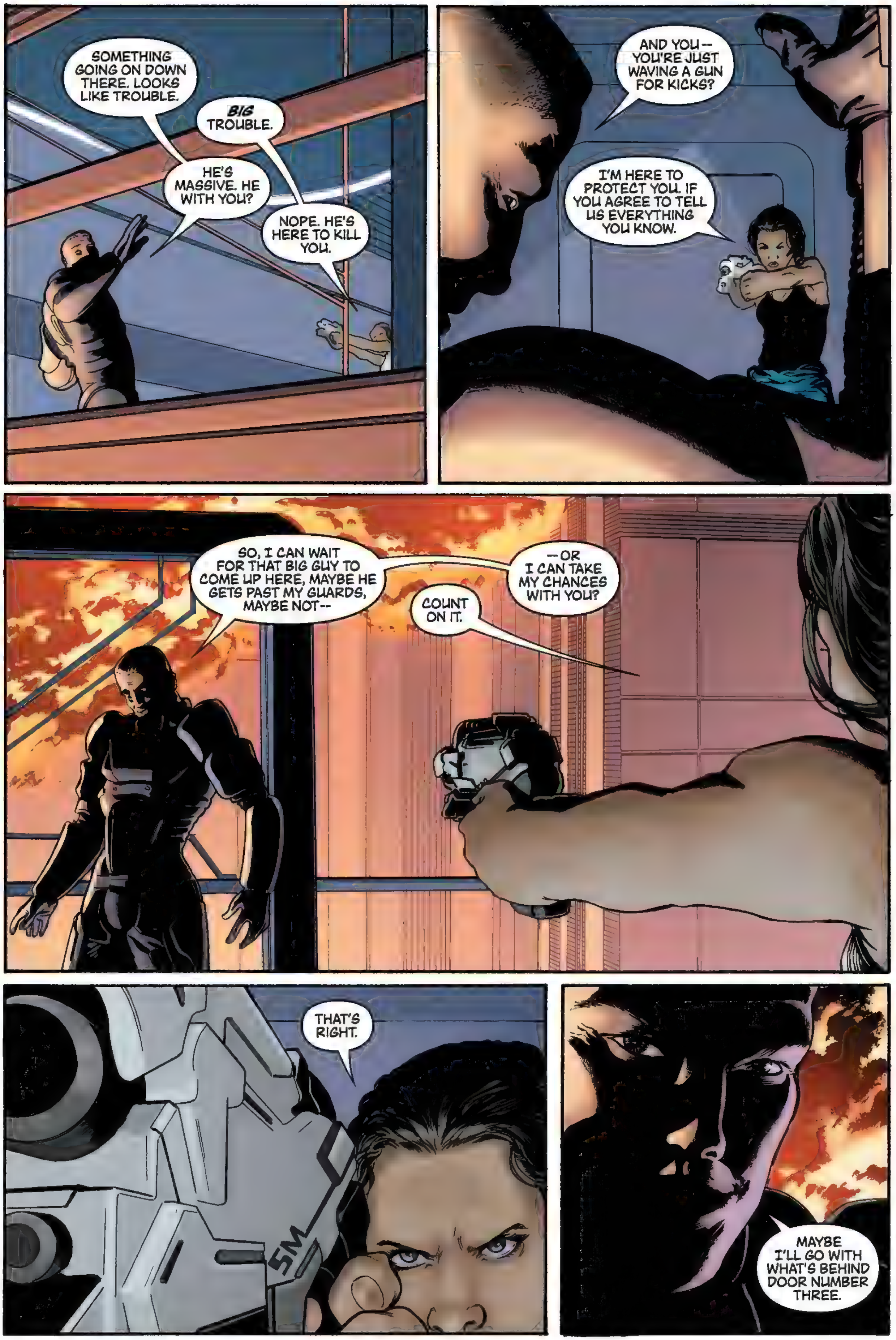

AHHH!
KABLAM
YOU'RE PROBABLY ASKING YOURSELF WHY YOU'RE STILL ALIVE.
I MEAN, I COULD'VE KILLED YOU EASILY ENOUGH.
...GUHH... UUGH...
BUT I SAID TO MYSELF, A SMART GUY LIKE THAT, WITH SUCH AN EXPENSIVE WEAPON.
I BET HE KNOWS A THING OR TWO --
WAIT!
I WASN'T TRYING TO KILL YOU, WREX.

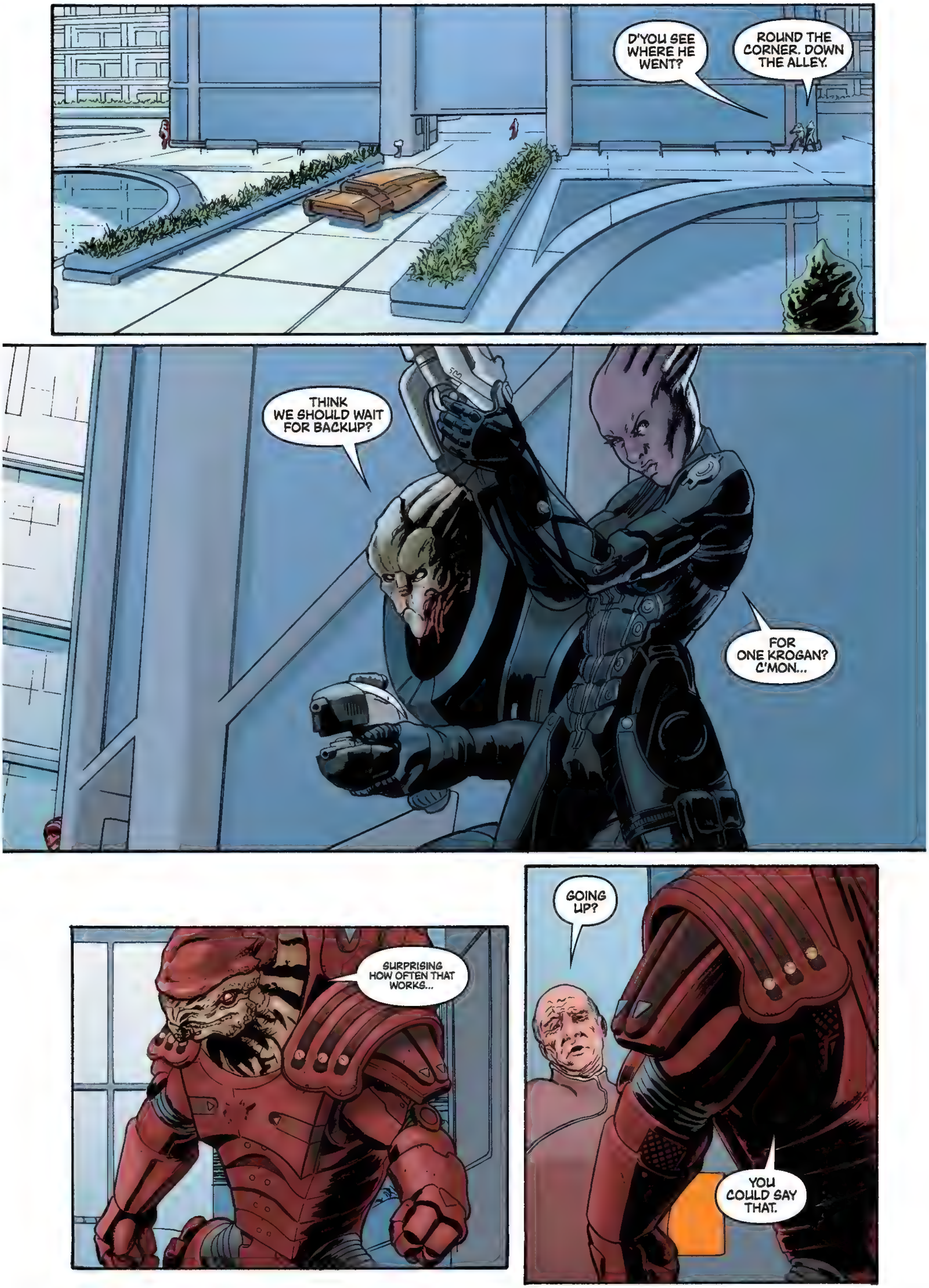

JASOX?
HEY, MAN. SORRY 'BOUT THE BODY SHOT. I WAS JUST TRYING TO SLOW YOU DOWN.
UH-HUH.
...LIKE I SAID...I WASN'T SENT HERE TO KILL YOU...JUST KEEP YOU AWAY FROM YOUR TARGET.
AND WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT MY TARGET?
NOTHING. EXCEPT THAT YOU'D BE COMING THIS WAY TO TAG HIM.
HOW'S THE BACK?
COULD BE WORSE. THANKS FOR NOT KILLING ME.
WHAT THE HELL AM I SUPPOSED TO DO WITH YOU NOW, JASOX?
UP TO YOU, WREX. THOUGH... I HOPE YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN THAT TIME I PULLED YOUR ASS OFF THAT BURNING SHIP.
HERE WE GO AGAIN.

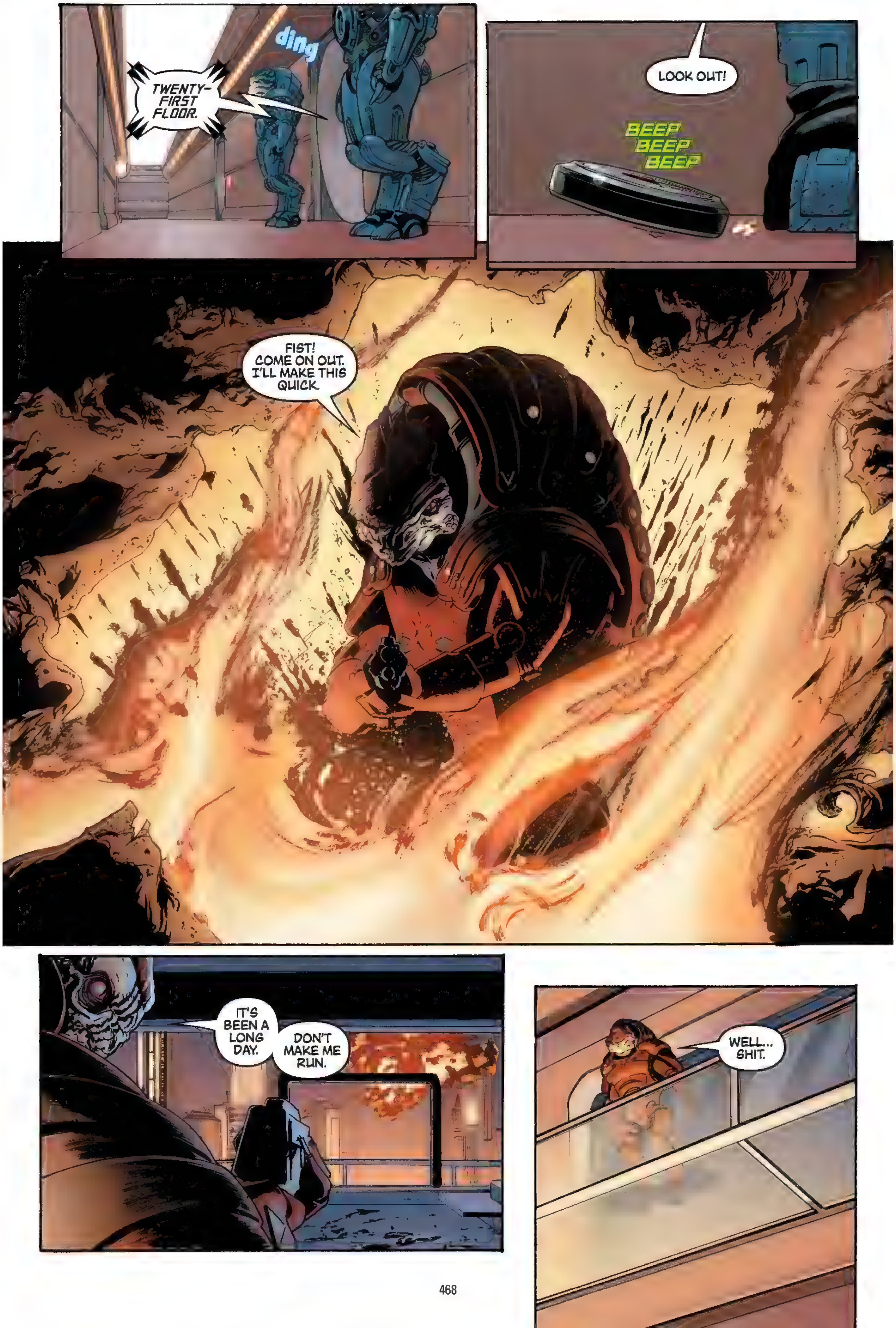

AM I EVER GOING TO HEAR THE END OF THAT?
NOT AS LONG AS YOU KEEP GIVING ME REASON TO BRING IT UP.
YOU CONVENIENTLY FORGET THAT THE ONLY REASON I WAS IN THAT BURNING SHIP WAS BECAUSE YOU SHOWED UP LATE.
I HAD TO TAKE OUT THE ENTIRE CREW MYSELF.
HEY, I DIDN'T HAVE TO SHOW UP AT ALL.
AHH. DAMN. THAT'S GONNA LEAVE A MARK.
YUP.
I COULD REALLY USE A DRINK. I'M BUYING. IF YOU WANT TO JOIN ME?
HMM.
BAR
YOU'RE STILL TRYING TO KEEP ME FROM MY TARGET.
I HAD TO TRY...
WELL, GOOD LUCK ANYWAY.
AND TO THINK I WAS GONNA GIVE YOU YOUR RIFLE BACK.
BAH. KEEP YOUR LUCK.

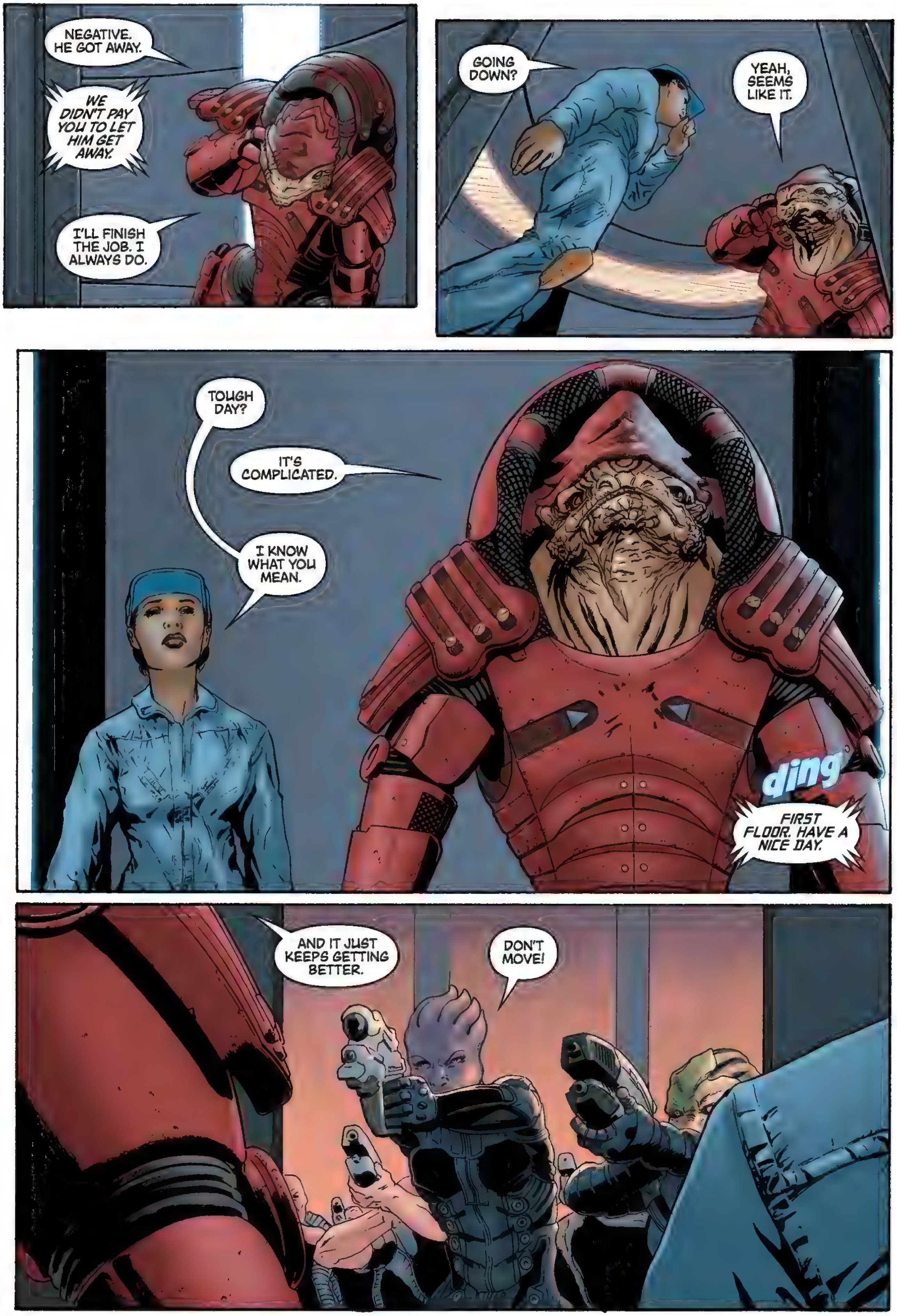

WELL, LOOKS LIKE YOUR PLAN TO STALL THE KROGAN IS WORKING.
SHIT!
NOT THE REACTION I WAS EXPECTING.
FIST ISN'T PLANNING TO COME OVER TO US.
WHAT?
HE'S BEEN BOUGHT OFF BY SOME... TURIAN.
SAREN ARTERIUS.
THE SPECTRE?
YEAH.
WHY? WHAT DOES HE WANT FIST FOR?
I DON'T KNOW, BUT I INTEND TO FIND OUT.
THERE'S NO TIME--
I'LL MAKE TIME.
C-SEC. STATE THE NATURE OF YOUR EMERGENCY.
YOU HAVE TO HELP ME! THERE'S A CRAZY KROGAN OUTSIDE MY APARTMENT! HE'S THREATENING ME! PLEASE!
OH GOD!

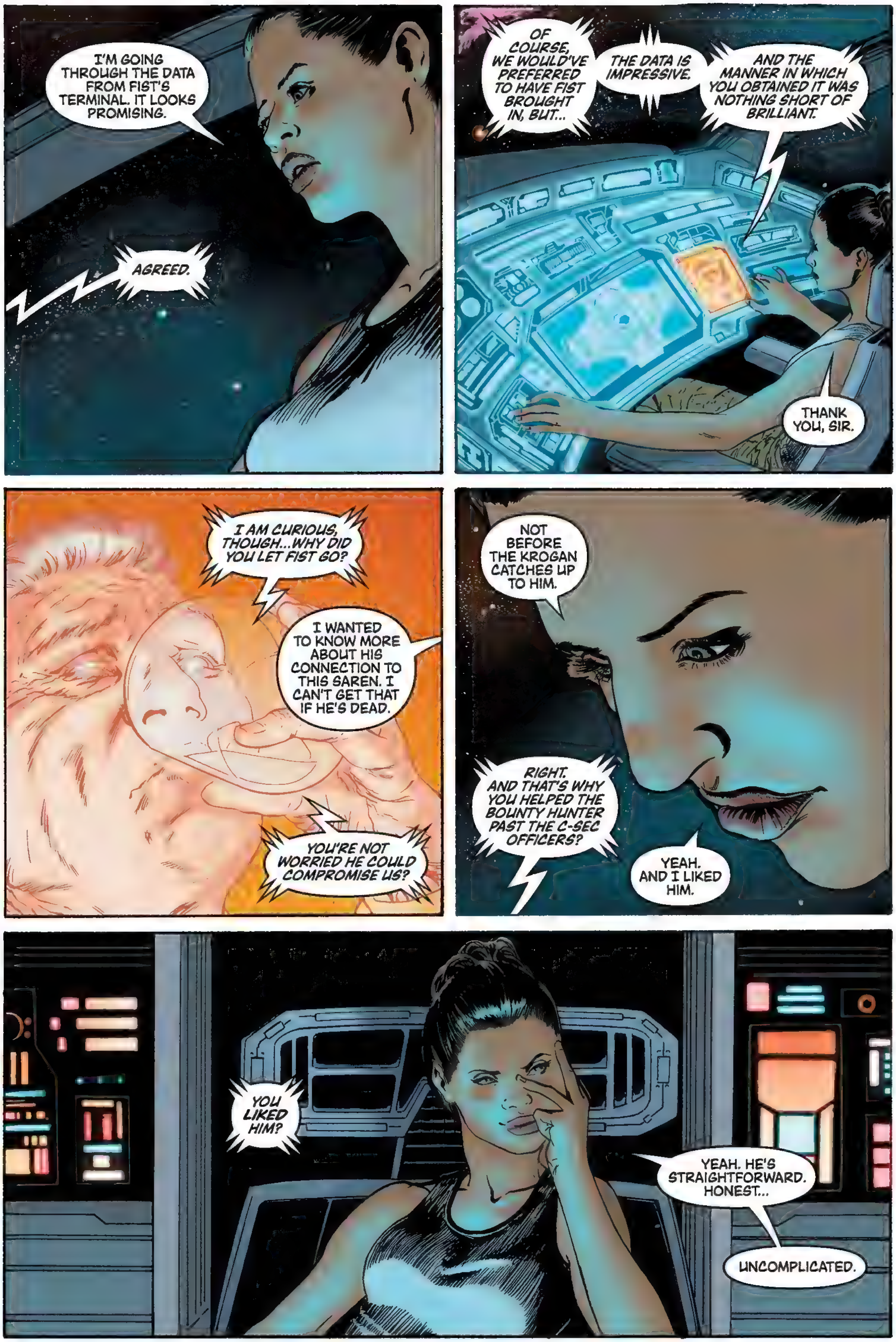

SMOOTH. NOW WHAT?
NOW, I GET FIST TO CHANGE HIS MIND.
WELCOME HOME, MR. FIST.
YOU TWO STAY OUT HERE. NOBODY COMES IN.
YOU DIDN'T TELL ME HE WAS IN THE BUILDING.
YOU SAID YOU COULD HANDLE IT.
ASSHOLE.
CRAP...
DON'T TRY TO RUN.
YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY WHAT I WAS EXPECTING, HONEY.
THINGS RARELY ARE. TAKE YOU, FOR INSTANCE.
I THOUGHT WE WERE GOING TO BE FRIENDS, THEN I LEARN YOU'VE BEEN BOUGHT BY A TURIAN SPECTRE.
FOUND OUT ABOUT THAT, HUH?
I THOUGHT WE HAD AN AGREEMENT-- SECRETS OF THE SHADOW BROKER FOR YOUR SAFETY.
YEAH...I GOT A BETTER OFFER FROM SAREN.

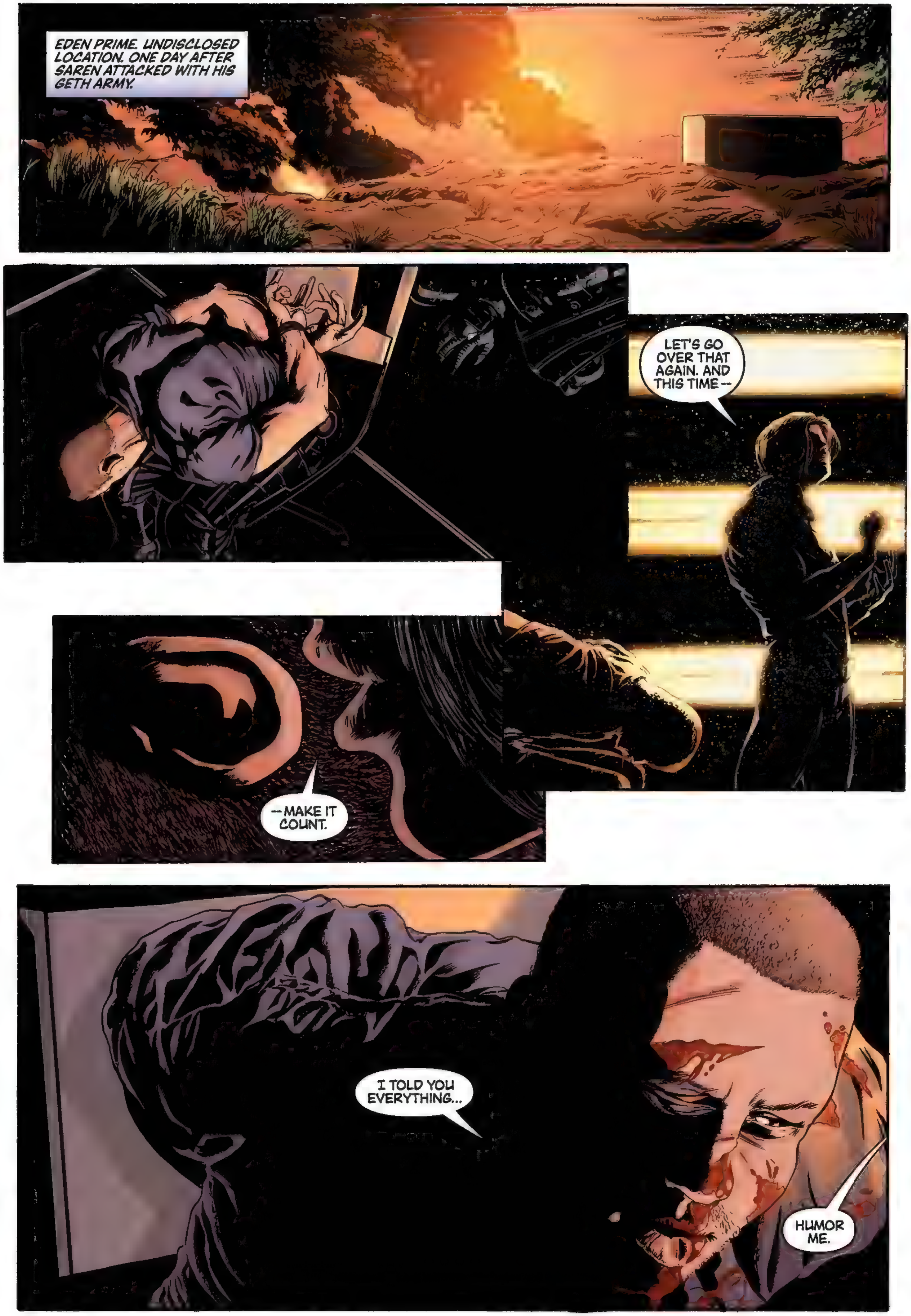

SOMETHING GOING ON DOWN THERE. LOOKS LIKE TROUBLE.
BIG TROUBLE.
HE'S MASSIVE. HE WITH YOU?
NOPE. HE'S HERE TO KILL YOU.
AND YOU-- YOU'RE JUST WAVING A GUN FOR KICKS?
I'M HERE TO PROTECT YOU. IF YOU AGREE TO TELL US EVERYTHING YOU KNOW.
SO, I CAN WAIT FOR THAT BIG GUY TO COME UP HERE, MAYBE HE GETS PAST MY GUARDS, MAYBE NOT--
--OR I CAN TAKE MY CHANCES WITH YOU?
COUNT ON IT.
SM
THAT'S RIGHT.
MAYBE I'LL GO WITH WHAT'S BEHIND DOOR NUMBER THREE.

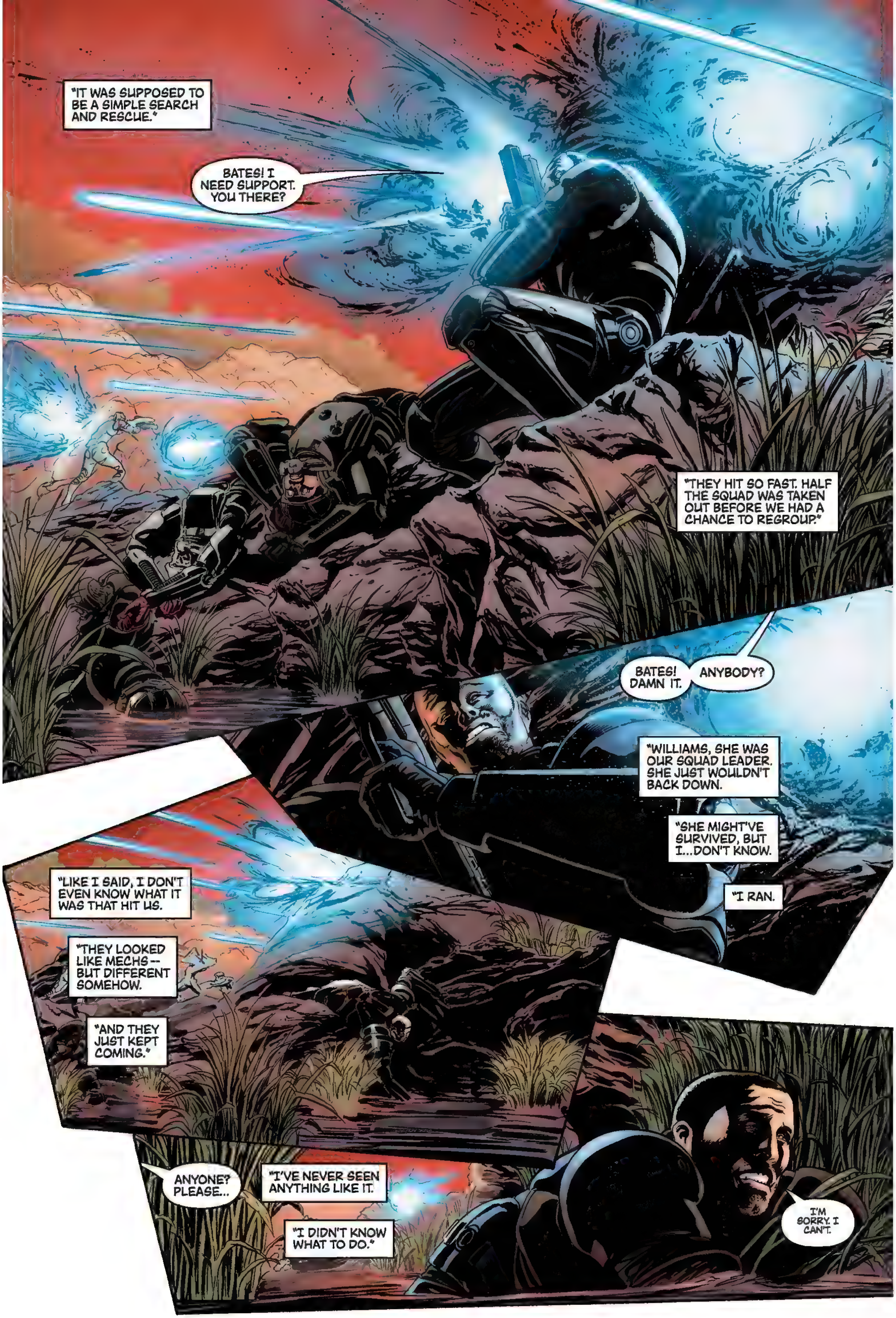

D'YOU SEE WHERE HE WENT?
ROUND THE CORNER. DOWN THE ALLEY.
THINK WE SHOULD WAIT FOR BACKUP?
FOR ONE KROGAN? C'MON...
SURPRISING HOW OFTEN THAT WORKS...
GOING UP?
YOU COULD SAY THAT.

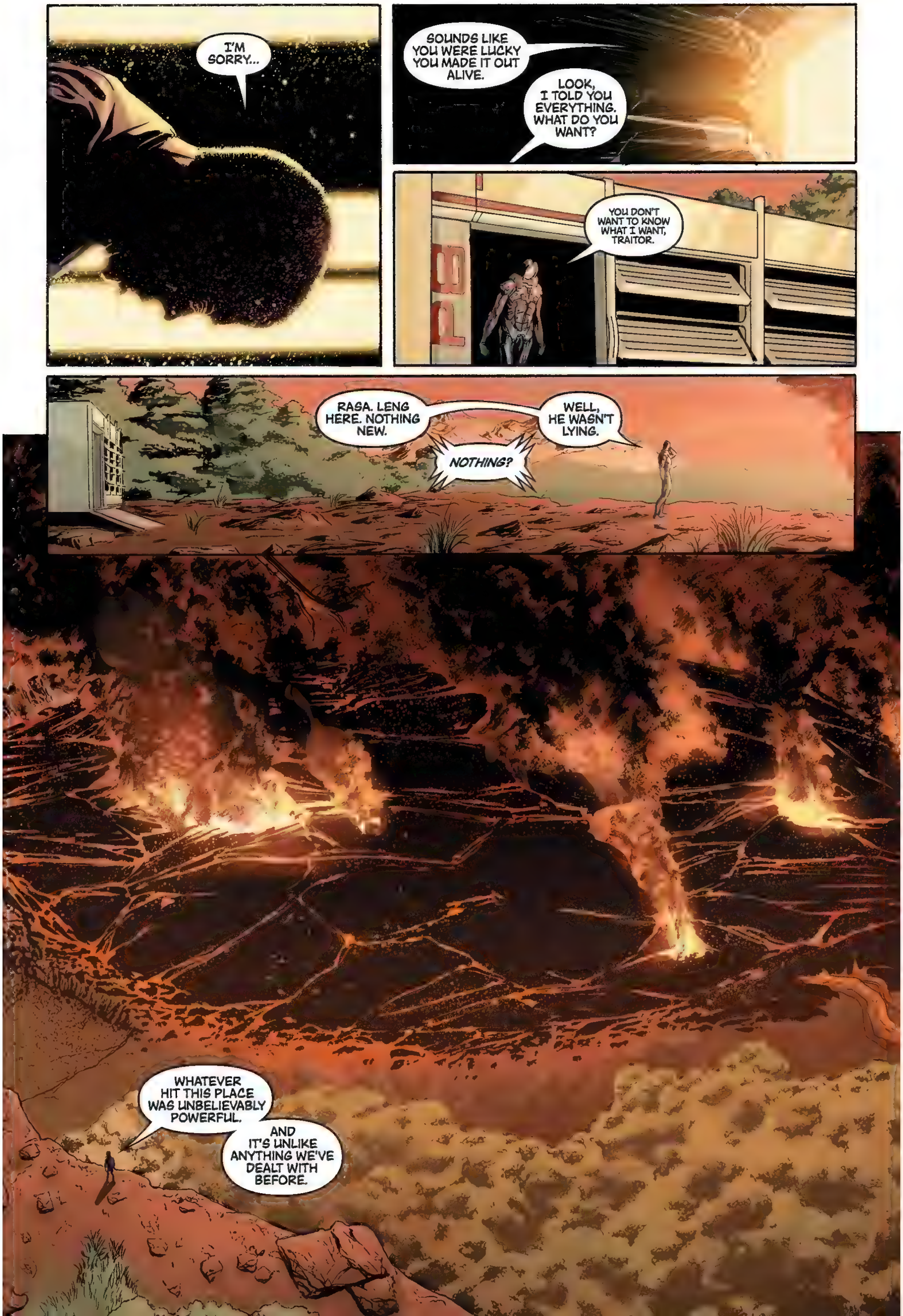

TWENTY-FIRST FLOOR.
ding
LOOK OUT!
BEEP BEEP BEEP
FIST! COME ON OUT. I'LL MAKE THIS QUICK.
IT'S BEEN A LONG DAY.
DON'T MAKE ME RUN.
WELL... SHIT.

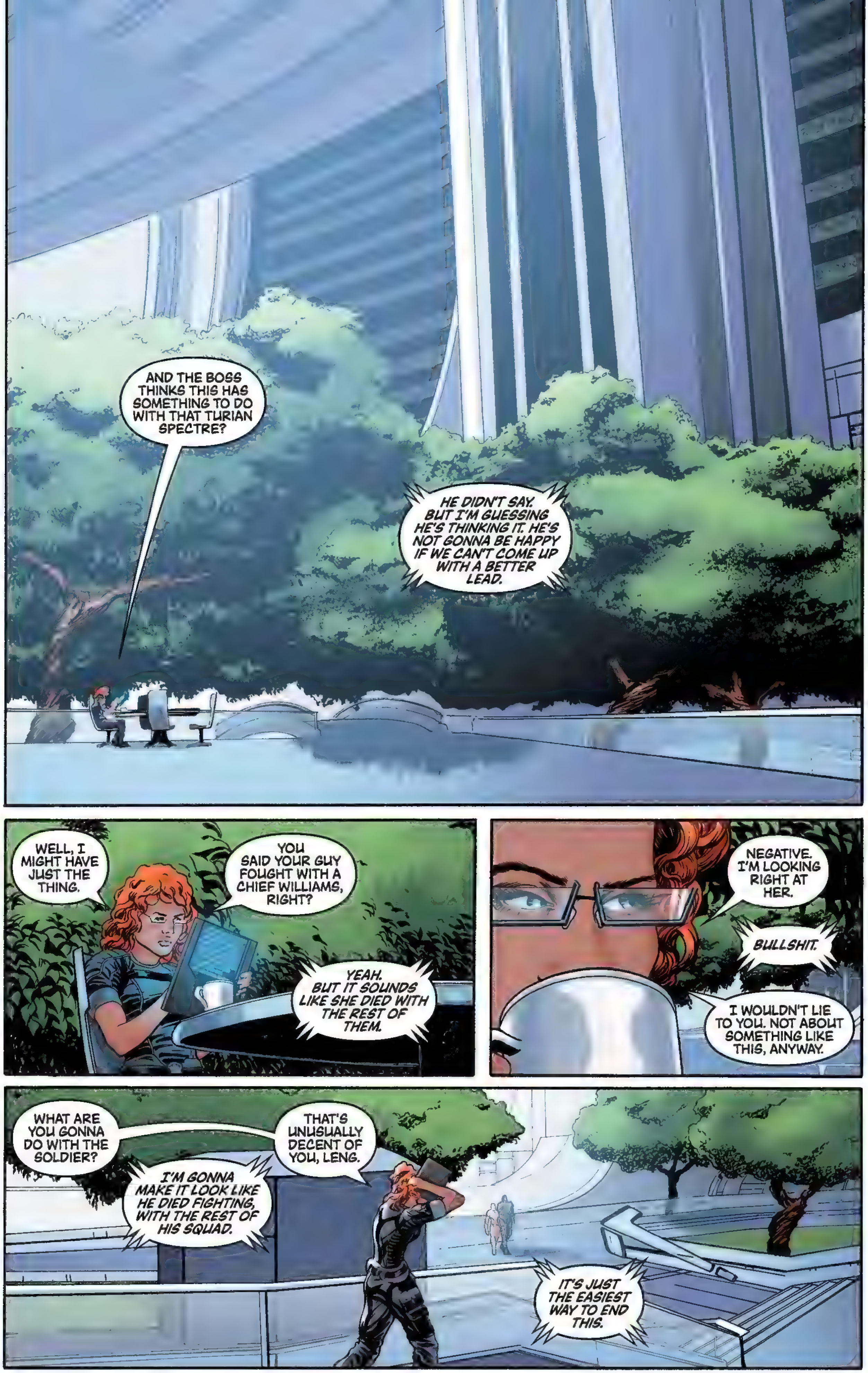

NEGATIVE. HE GOT AWAY.
WE DIDN'T PAY YOU TO LET HIM GET AWAY.
I'LL FINISH THE JOB. I ALWAYS DO.
GOING DOWN?
YEAH, SEEMS LIKE IT.
TOUGH DAY?
IT'S COMPLICATED.
I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN.
ding
FIRST FLOOR. HAVE A NICE DAY.
AND IT JUST KEEPS GETTING BETTER.
DON'T MOVE!

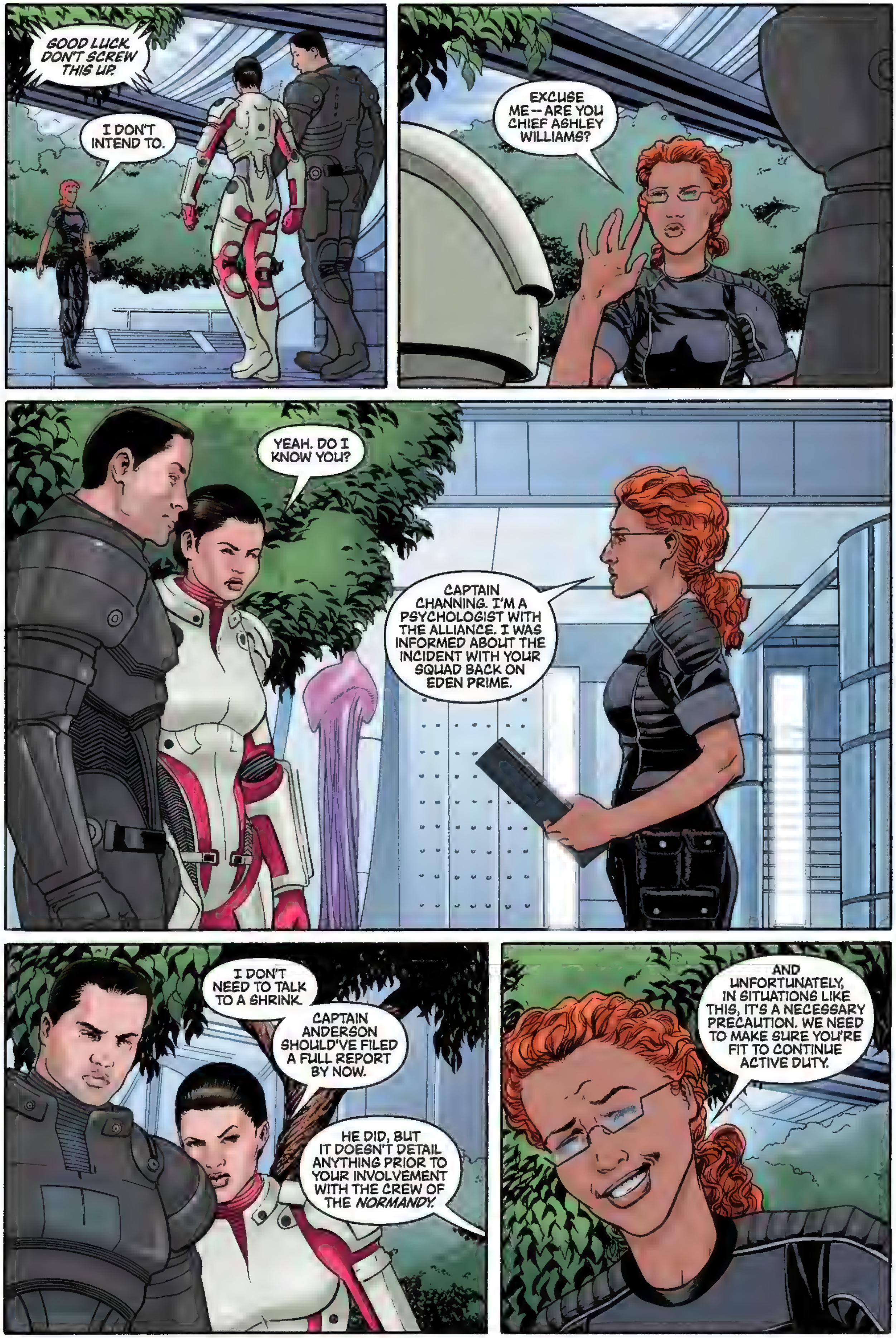

I'M GOING THROUGH THE DATA FROM FIST'S TERMINAL. IT LOOKS PROMISING.
AGREED.
OF COURSE, WE WOULD'VE PREFERRED TO HAVE FIST BROUGHT IN, BUT...
THE DATA IS IMPRESSIVE.
AND THE MANNER IN WHICH YOU OBTAINED IT WAS NOTHING SHORT OF BRILLIANT.
THANK YOU, SIR.
I AM CURIOUS, THOUGH...WHY DID YOU LET FIST GO?
I WANTED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT HIS CONNECTION TO THIS SAREN. I CAN'T GET THAT IF HE'S DEAD.
YOU'RE NOT WORRIED HE COULD COMPROMISE US?
NOT BEFORE THE KROGAN CATCHES UP TO HIM.
RIGHT. AND THAT'S WHY YOU HELPED THE BOUNTY HUNTER PAST THE C-SEC OFFICERS?
YEAH. AND I LIKED HIM.
YOU LIKED HIM?
YEAH. HE'S STRAIGHTFORWARD. HONEST...
UNCOMPLICATED.

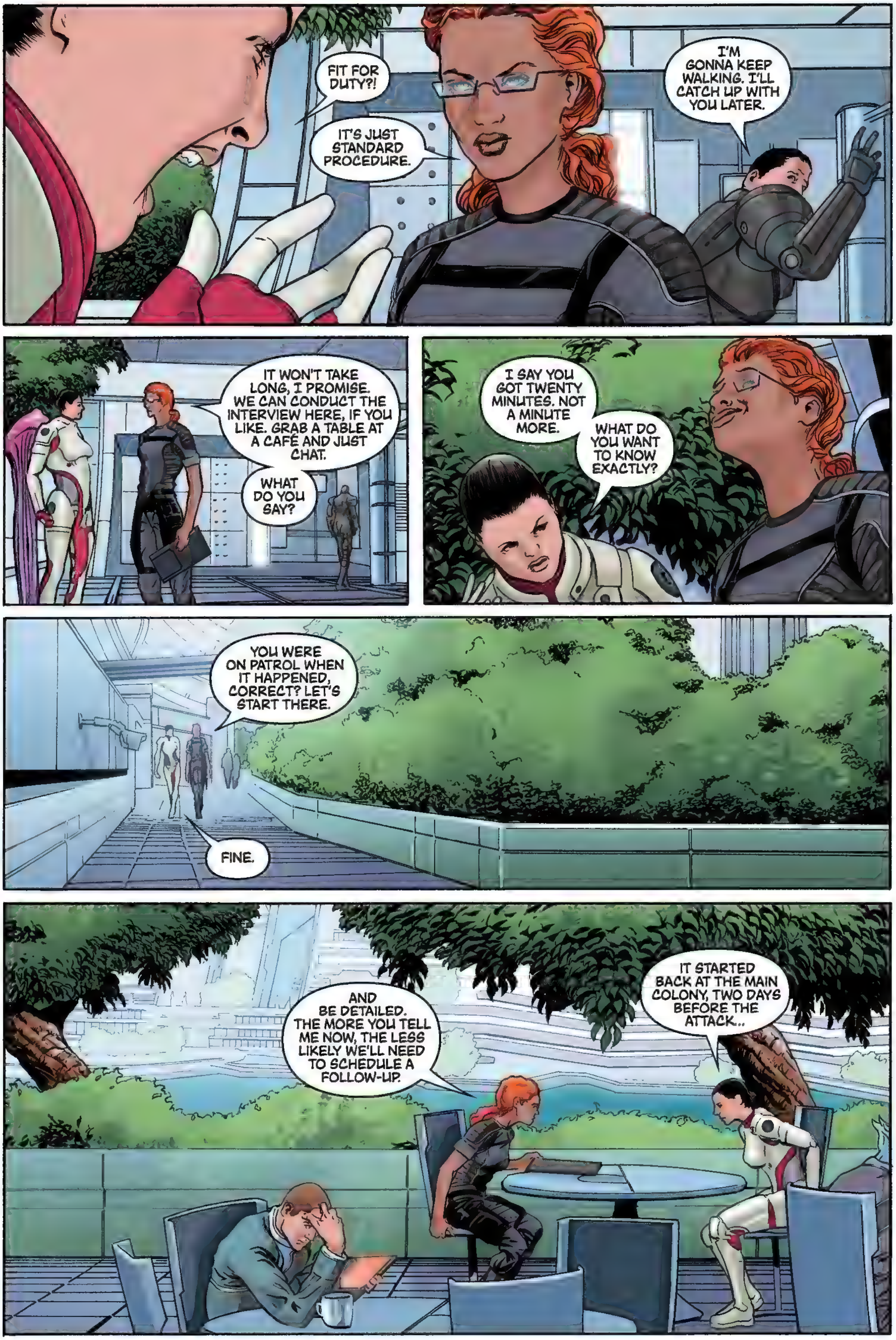

EDEN PRIME. UNDISCLOSED LOCATION. ONE DAY AFTER SAREN ATTACKED WITH HIS GETH ARMY.
LET'S GO OVER THAT AGAIN. AND THIS TIME--
--MAKE IT COUNT.
I TOLD YOU EVERYTHING...
HUMOR ME.

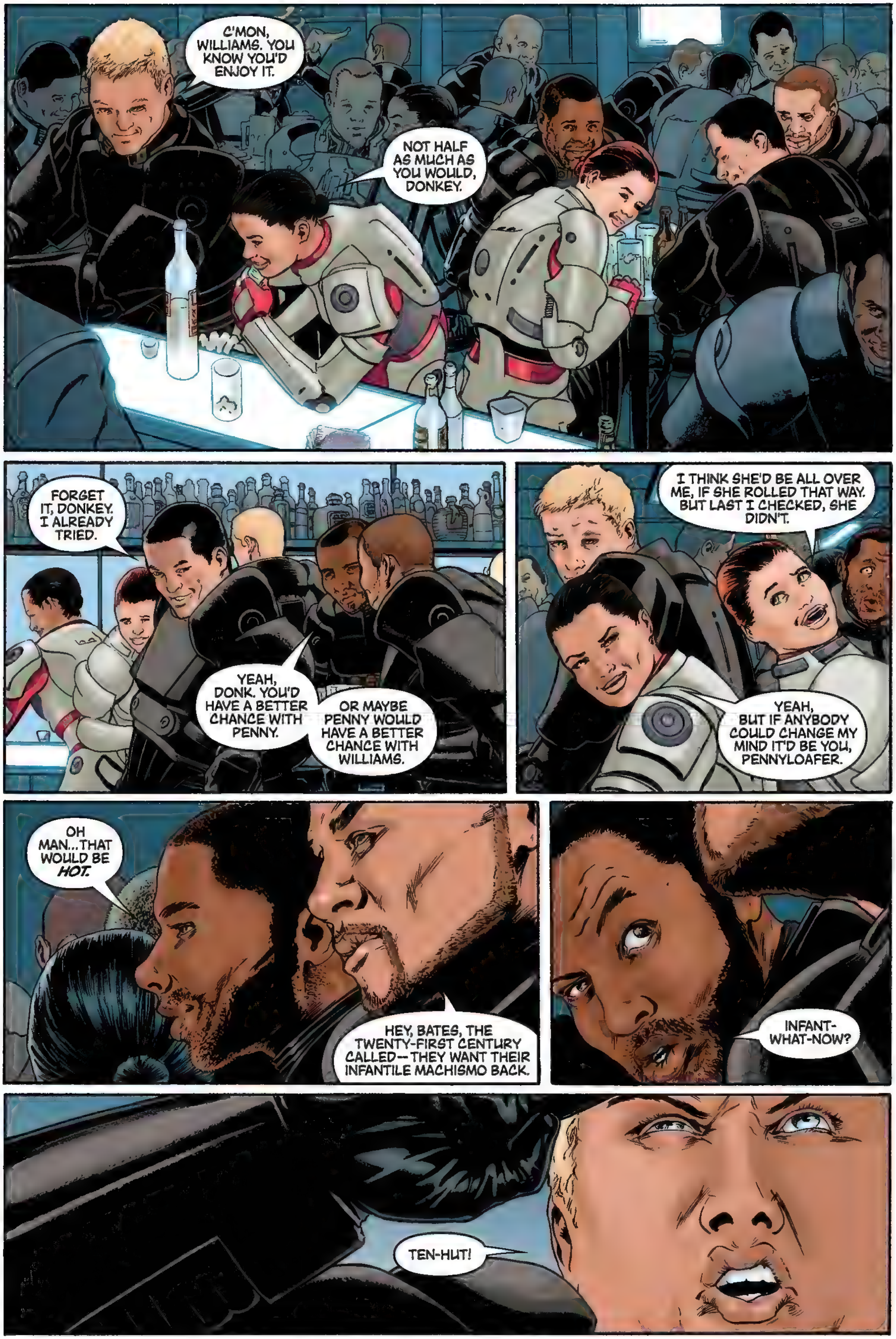

"IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A SIMPLE SEARCH AND RESCUE."
BATES! I NEED SUPPORT. YOU THERE?
"THEY HIT SO FAST. HALF THE SQUAD WAS TAKEN OUT BEFORE WE HAD A CHANCE TO REGROUP."
BATES! DAMN IT.
ANYBODY?
"WILLIAMS, SHE WAS OUR SQUAD LEADER. SHE JUST WOULDN'T BACK DOWN.
"SHE MIGHT'VE SURVIVED, BUT I...DON'T KNOW.
"I RAN.
"LIKE I SAID, I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT IT WAS THAT HIT US.
"THEY LOOKED LIKE MECHS -- BUT DIFFERENT SOMEHOW.
"AND THEY JUST KEPT COMING."
ANYONE? PLEASE...
"I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.
"I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO."
I'M SORRY. I CAN'T.

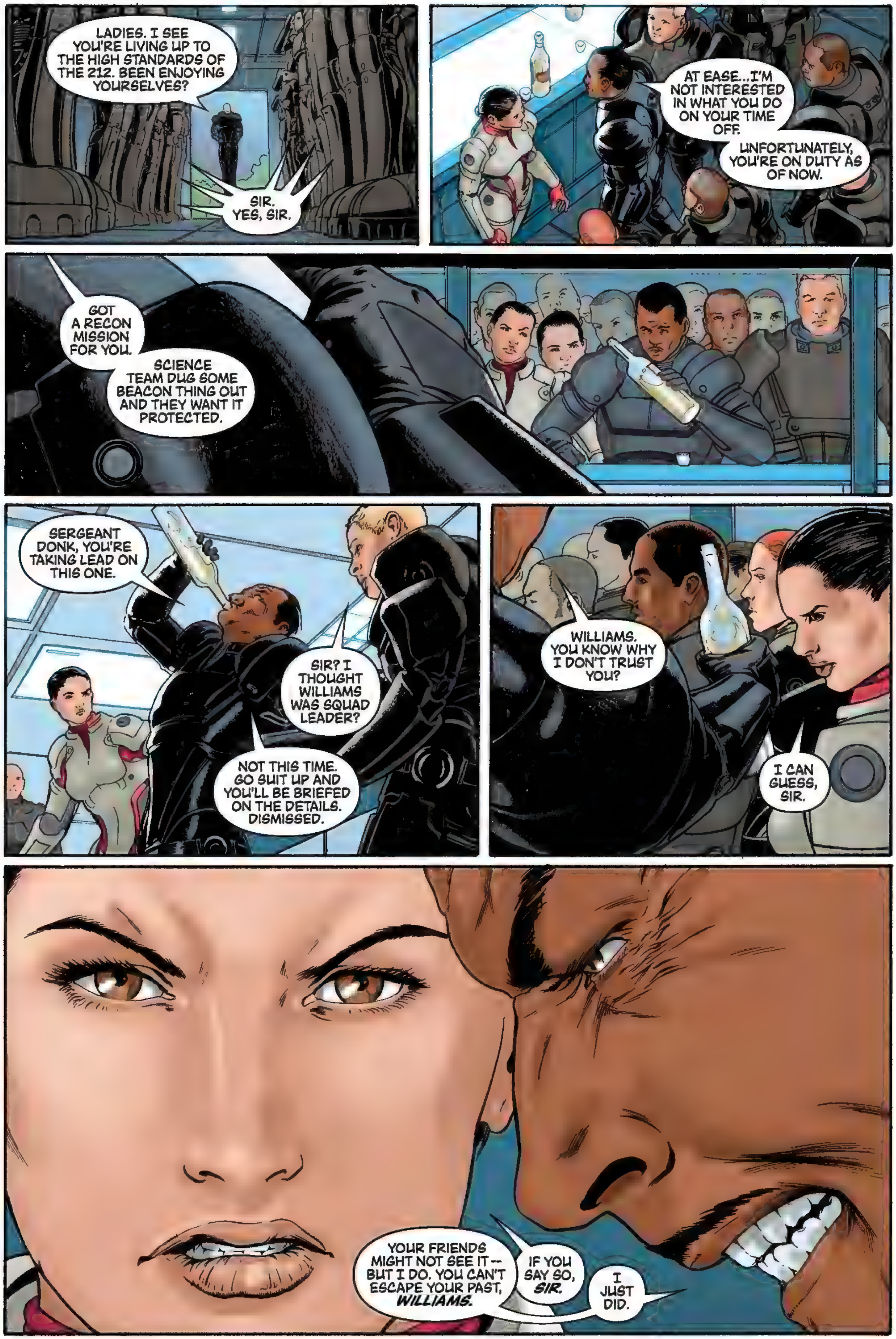

I'M SORRY...
SOUNDS LIKE YOU WERE LUCKY YOU MADE IT OUT ALIVE.
LOOK, I TOLD YOU EVERYTHING. WHAT DO YOU WANT?
YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW WHAT I WANT, TRAITOR.
RASA. LENG HERE. NOTHING NEW.
WELL, HE WASN'T LYING.
NOTHING?
WHATEVER HIT THIS PLACE WAS UNBELIEVABLY POWERFUL.
AND IT'S UNLIKE ANYTHING WE'VE DEALT WITH BEFORE.

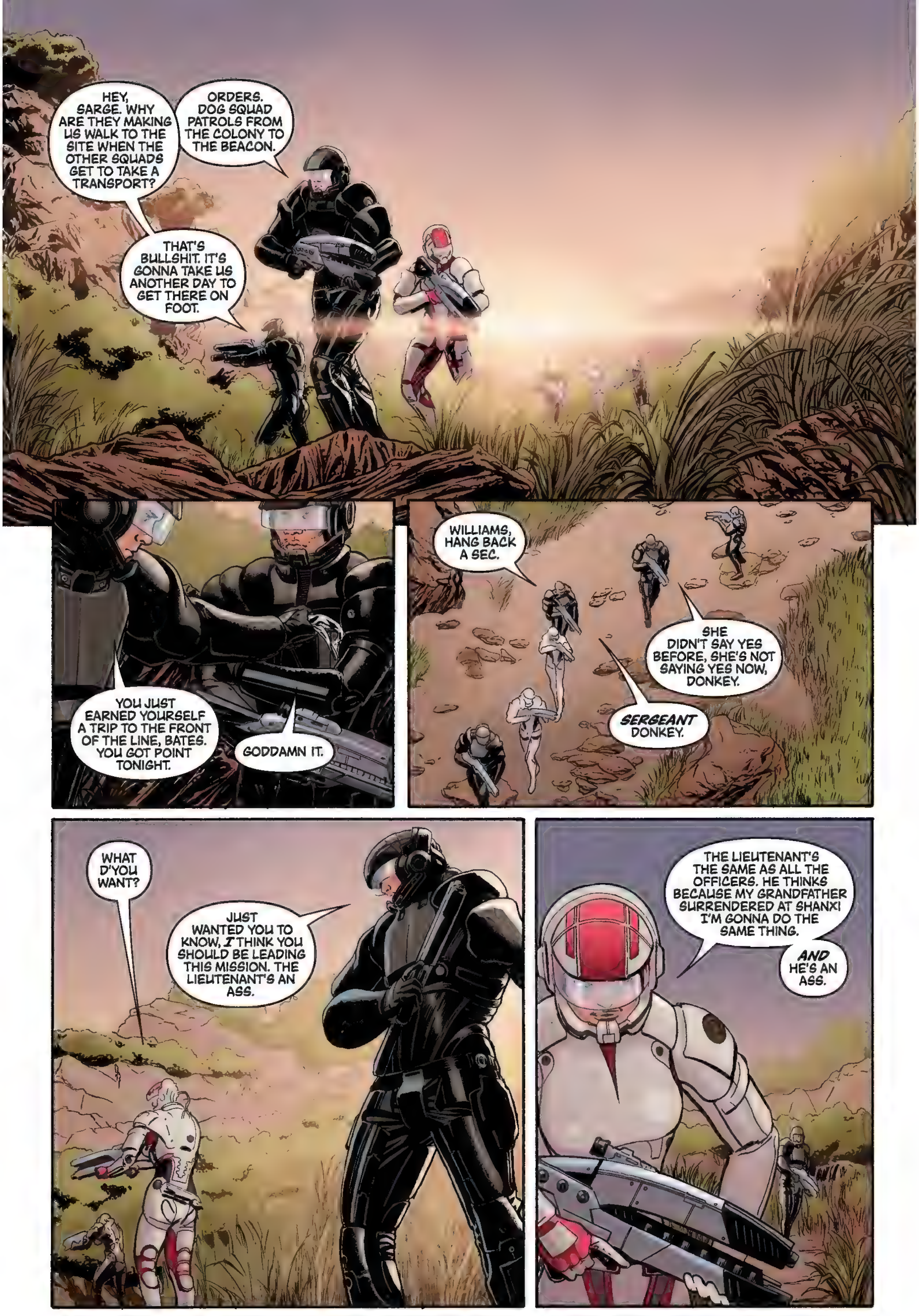

AND THE BOSS THINKS THIS HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THAT TURIAN SPECTRE?
HE DIDN'T SAY. BUT I'M GUESSING HE'S THINKING IT. HE'S NOT GONNA BE HAPPY IF WE CAN'T COME UP WITH A BETTER LEAD.
WELL, I MIGHT HAVE JUST THE THING.
YOU SAID YOUR GUY FOUGHT WITH A CHIEF WILLIAMS, RIGHT?
YEAH. BUT IT SOUNDS LIKE SHE DIED WITH THE REST OF THEM.
NEGATIVE. I'M LOOKING RIGHT AT HER.
BULLSHIT.
I WOULDN'T LIE TO YOU. NOT ABOUT SOMETHING LIKE THIS, ANYWAY.
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO WITH THE SOLDIER?
I'M GONNA MAKE IT LOOK LIKE HE DIED FIGHTING, WITH THE REST OF HIS SQUAD.
THAT'S UNUSUALLY DECENT OF YOU, LENG.
IT'S JUST THE EASIEST WAY TO END THIS.

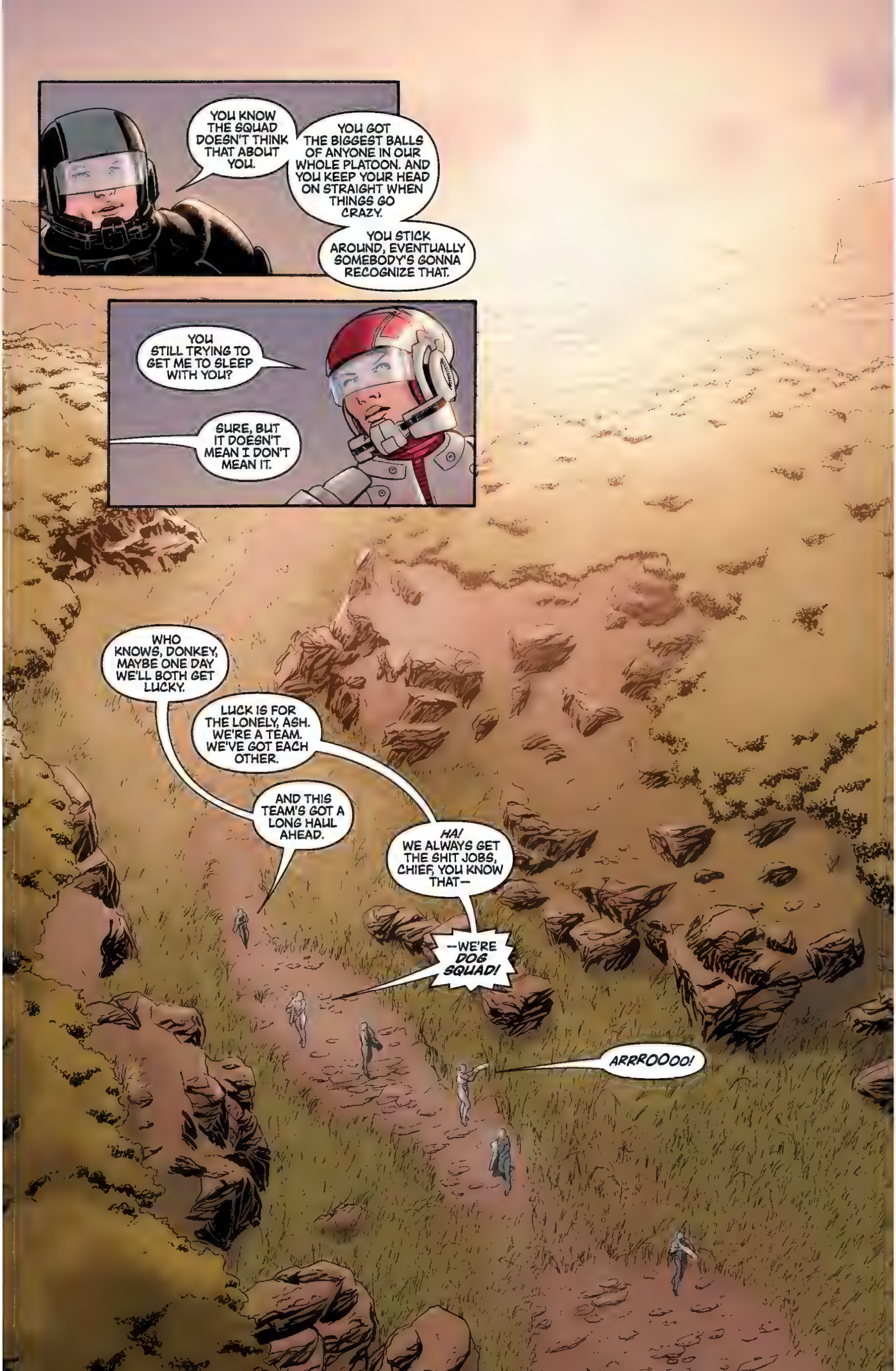

GOOD LUCK. DON'T SCREW THIS UP.
I DON'T INTEND TO.
EXCUSE ME -- ARE YOU CHIEF ASHLEY WILLIAMS?
YEAH. DO I KNOW YOU?
CAPTAIN CHANNING. I'M A PSYCHOLOGIST WITH THE ALLIANCE. I WAS INFORMED ABOUT THE INCIDENT WITH YOUR SQUAD BACK ON EDEN PRIME.
I DON'T NEED TO TALK TO A SHRINK.
CAPTAIN ANDERSON SHOULD'VE FILED A FULL REPORT BY NOW.
HE DID, BUT IT DOESN'T DETAIL ANYTHING PRIOR TO YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE CREW OF THE *NORMANDY*.
AND UNFORTUNATELY, IN SITUATIONS LIKE THIS, IT'S A NECESSARY PRECAUTION. WE NEED TO MAKE SURE YOU'RE FIT TO CONTINUE ACTIVE DUTY.

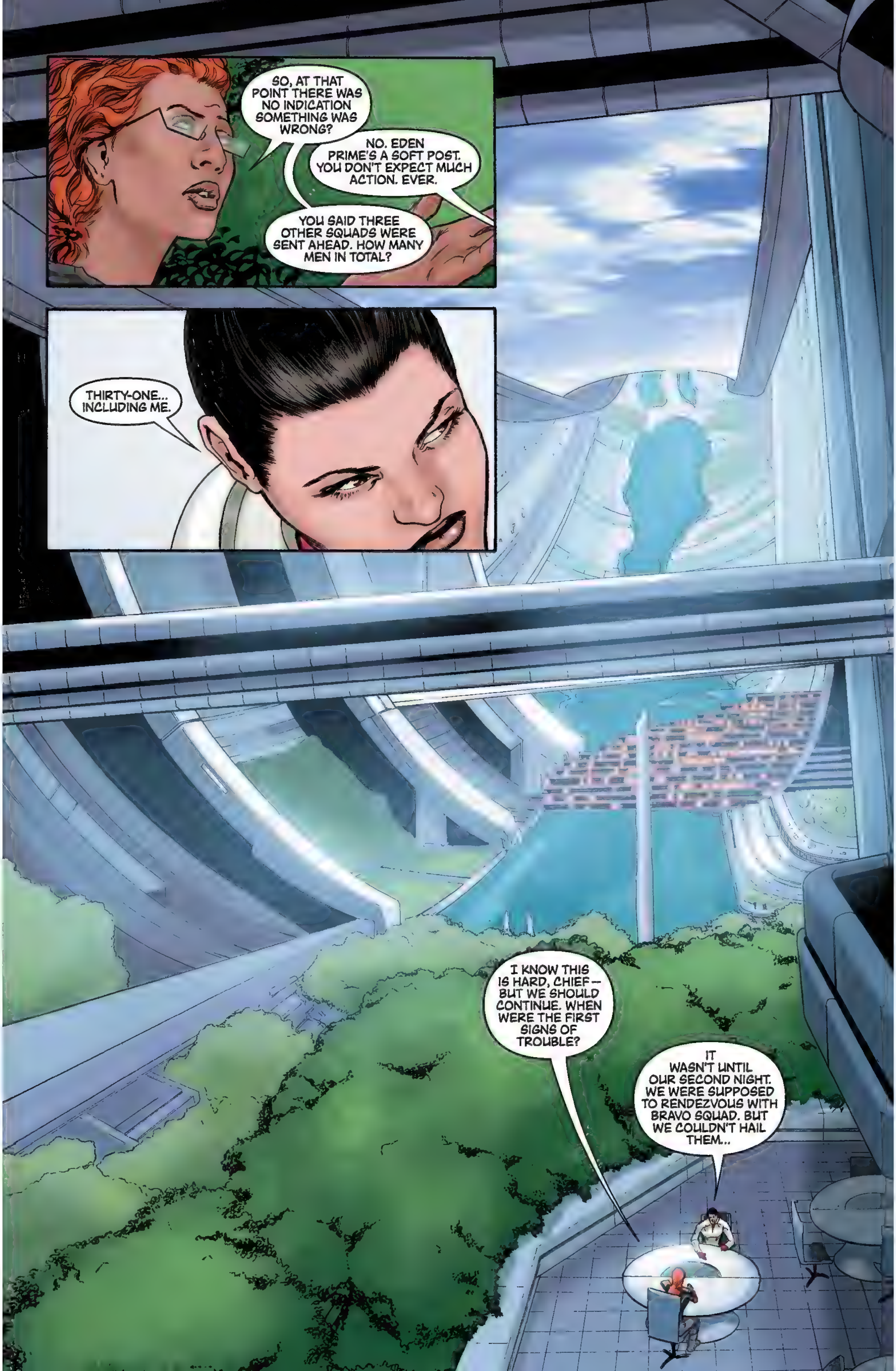

FIT FOR DUTY?!
IT'S JUST STANDARD PROCEDURE.
I'M GONNA KEEP WALKING. I'LL CATCH UP WITH YOU LATER.
IT WON'T TAKE LONG, I PROMISE. WE CAN CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW HERE, IF YOU LIKE. GRAB A TABLE AT A CAFÉ AND JUST CHAT.
WHAT DO YOU SAY?
I SAY YOU GOT TWENTY MINUTES. NOT A MINUTE MORE.
WHAT DO YOU WANT TO KNOW EXACTLY?
YOU WERE ON PATROL WHEN IT HAPPENED, CORRECT? LET'S START THERE.
FINE.
AND BE DETAILED. THE MORE YOU TELL ME NOW, THE LESS LIKELY WE'LL NEED TO SCHEDULE A FOLLOW-UP.
IT STARTED BACK AT THE MAIN COLONY, TWO DAYS BEFORE THE ATTACK...

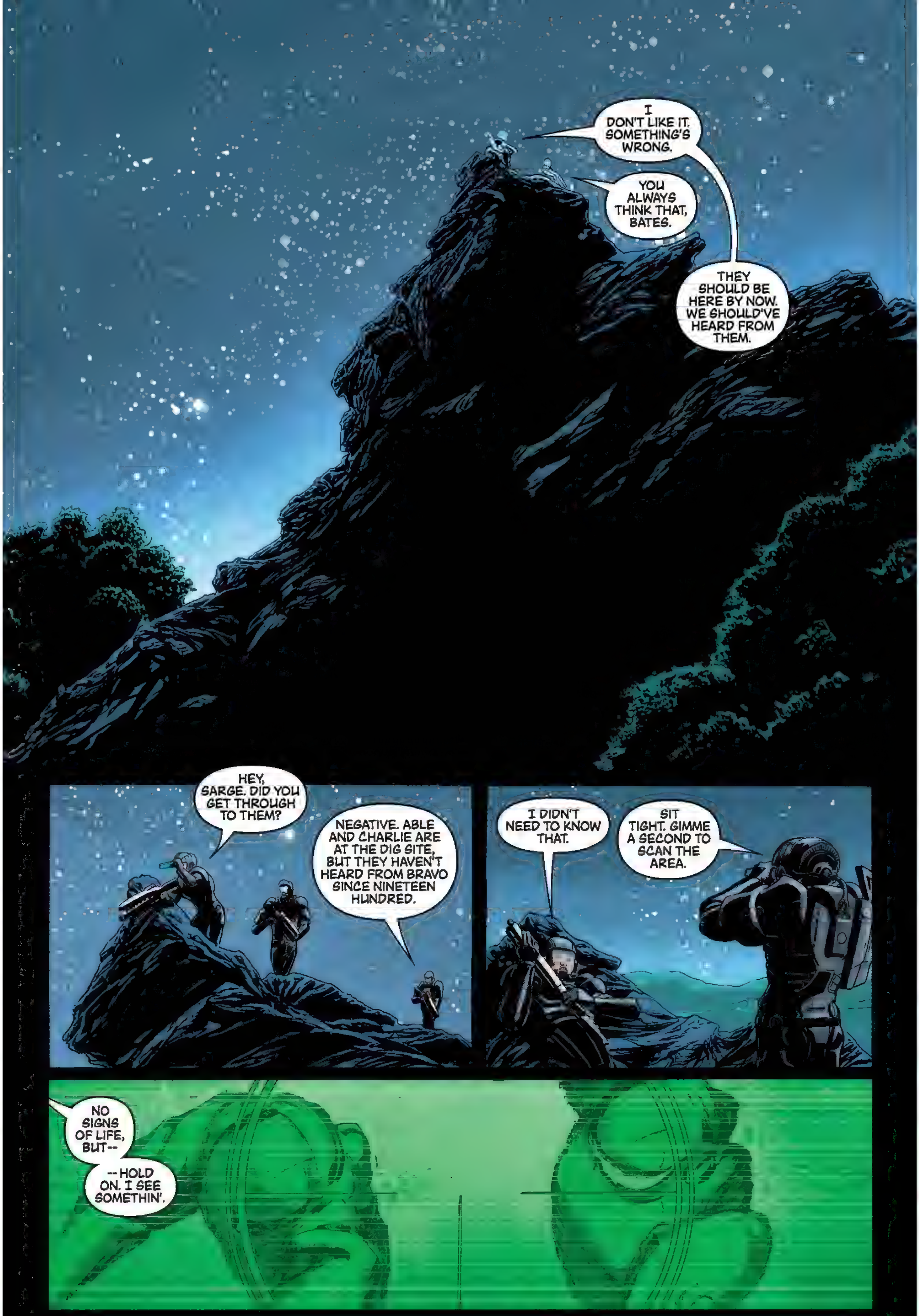

C'MON, WILLIAMS. YOU KNOW YOU'D ENJOY IT.
NOT HALF AS MUCH AS YOU WOULD, DONKEY.
FORGET IT, DONKEY. I ALREADY TRIED.
YEAH, DONK. YOU'D HAVE A BETTER CHANCE WITH PENNY.
OR MAYBE PENNY WOULD HAVE A BETTER CHANCE WITH WILLIAMS.
I THINK SHE'D BE ALL OVER ME, IF SHE ROLLED THAT WAY. BUT LAST I CHECKED, SHE DIDN'T.
YEAH, BUT IF ANYBODY COULD CHANGE MY MIND IT'D BE YOU, PENNYLOAFER.
OH MAN...THAT WOULD BE *HOT.*
HEY, BATES, THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CALLED--THEY WANT THEIR INFANTILE MACHISMO BACK.
INFANT-WHAT-NOW?
TEN-HUT!

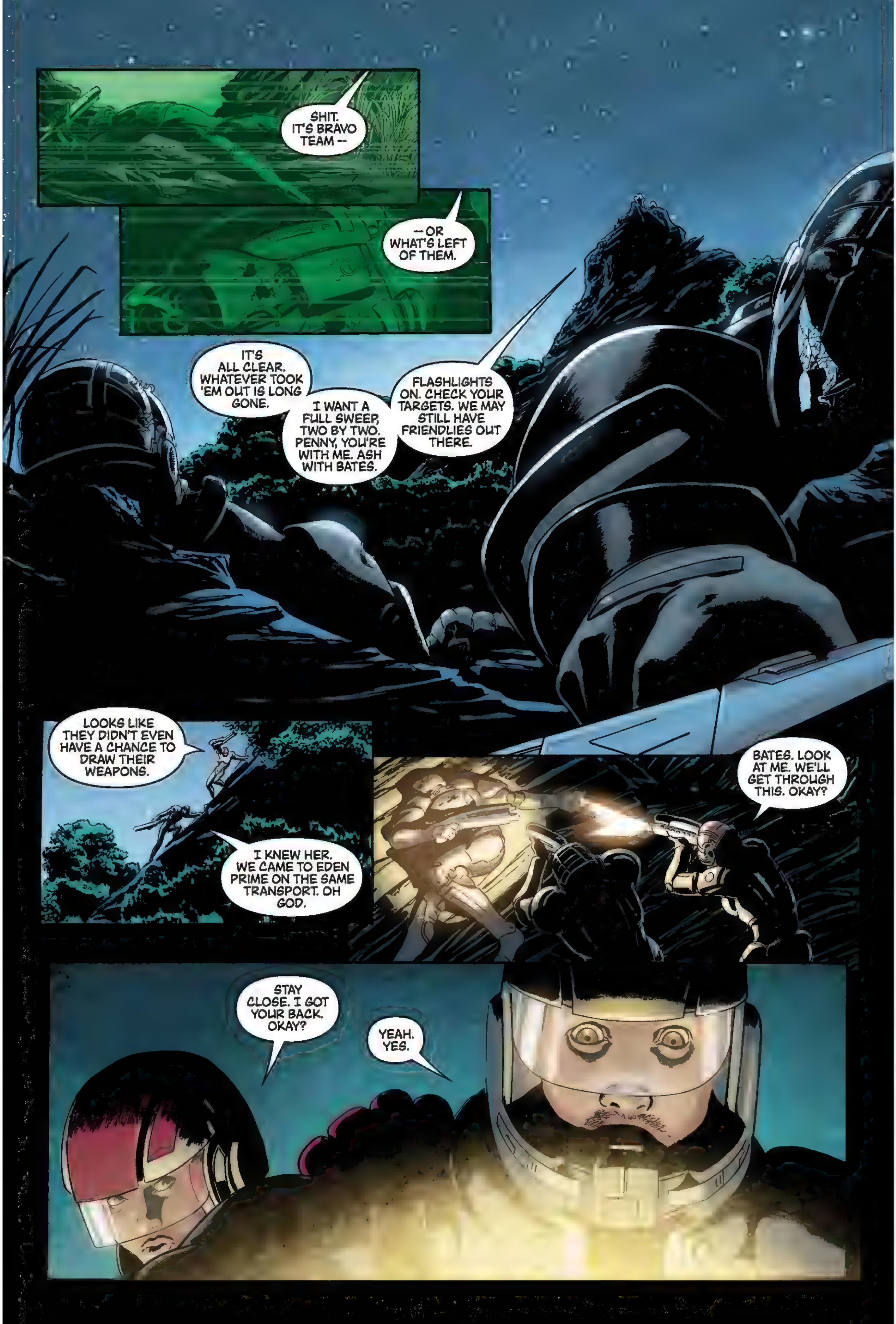

LADIES. I SEE YOU'RE LIVING UP TO THE HIGH STANDARDS OF THE 212. BEEN ENJOYING YOURSELVES?
SIR. YES, SIR.
AT EASE...I'M NOT INTERESTED IN WHAT YOU DO ON YOUR TIME OFF.
UNFORTUNATELY, YOU'RE ON DUTY AS OF NOW.
GOT A RECON MISSION FOR YOU.
SCIENCE TEAM DUG SOME BEACON THING OUT AND THEY WANT IT PROTECTED.
SERGEANT DONK, YOU'RE TAKING LEAD ON THIS ONE.
SIR? I THOUGHT WILLIAMS WAS SQUAD LEADER?
NOT THIS TIME. GO SUIT UP AND YOU'LL BE BRIEFED ON THE DETAILS. DISMISSED.
WILLIAMS. YOU KNOW WHY I DON'T TRUST YOU?
I CAN GUESS, SIR.
YOUR FRIENDS MIGHT NOT SEE IT -- BUT I DO. YOU CAN'T ESCAPE YOUR PAST, *WILLIAMS.*
IF YOU SAY SO, *SIR.*
I JUST DID.

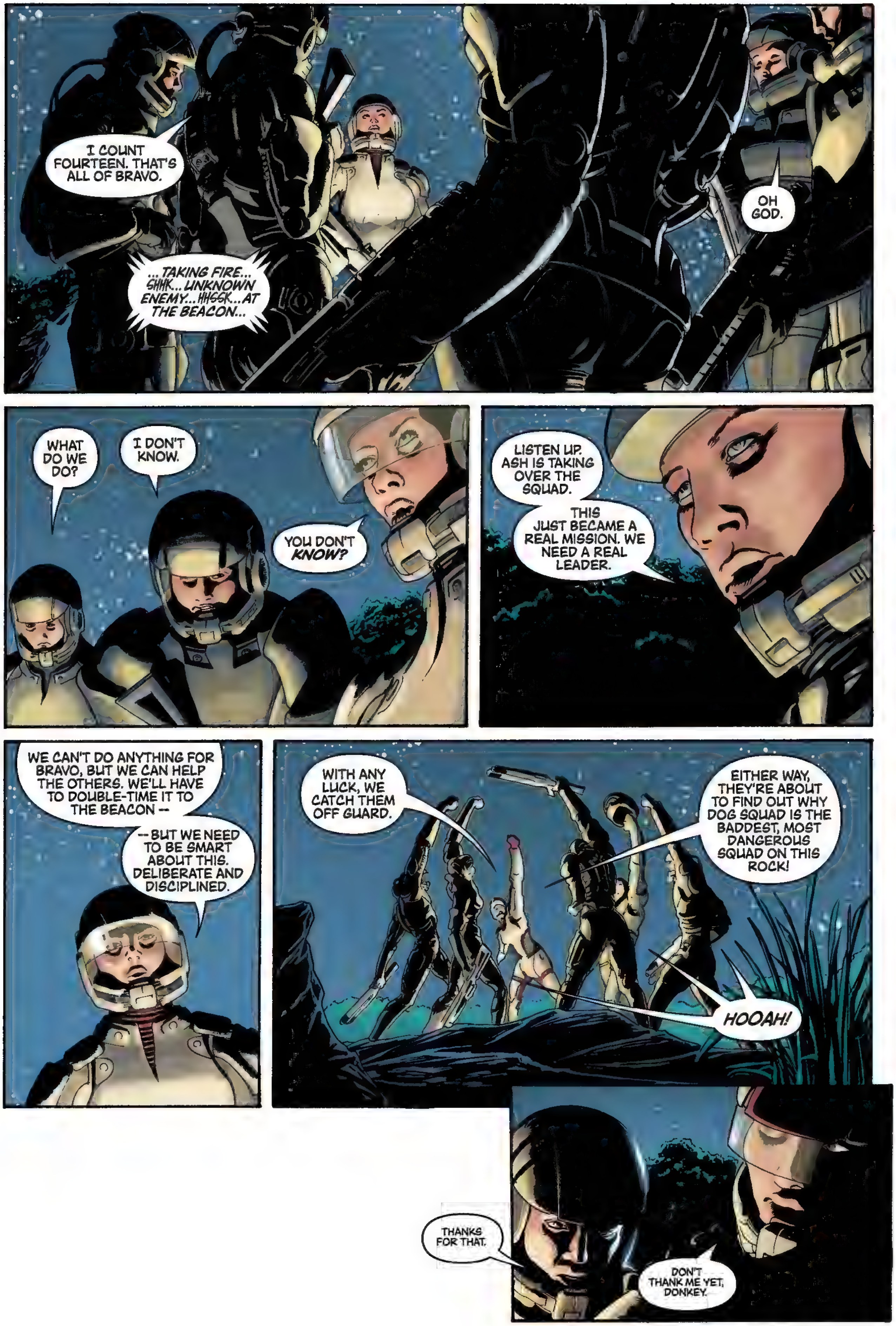

HEY, SARGE. WHY ARE THEY MAKING US WALK TO THE SITE WHEN THE OTHER SQUADS GET TO TAKE A TRANSPORT?
ORDERS. DOG SQUAD PATROLS FROM THE COLONY TO THE BEACON.
THAT'S BULLSHIT. IT'S GONNA TAKE US ANOTHER DAY TO GET THERE ON FOOT.
YOU JUST EARNED YOURSELF A TRIP TO THE FRONT OF THE LINE, BATES. YOU GOT POINT TONIGHT.
GODDAMN IT.
WILLIAMS, HANG BACK A SEC.
SHE DIDN'T SAY YES BEFORE, SHE'S NOT SAYING YES NOW, DONKEY.
SERGEANT DONKEY.
WHAT D'YOU WANT?
JUST WANTED YOU TO KNOW, *I* THINK YOU SHOULD BE LEADING THIS MISSION. THE LIEUTENANT'S AN ASS.
THE LIEUTENANT'S THE SAME AS ALL THE OFFICERS. HE THINKS BECAUSE MY GRANDFATHER SURRENDERED AT SHANXI I'M GONNA DO THE SAME THING.
AND HE'S AN ASS.

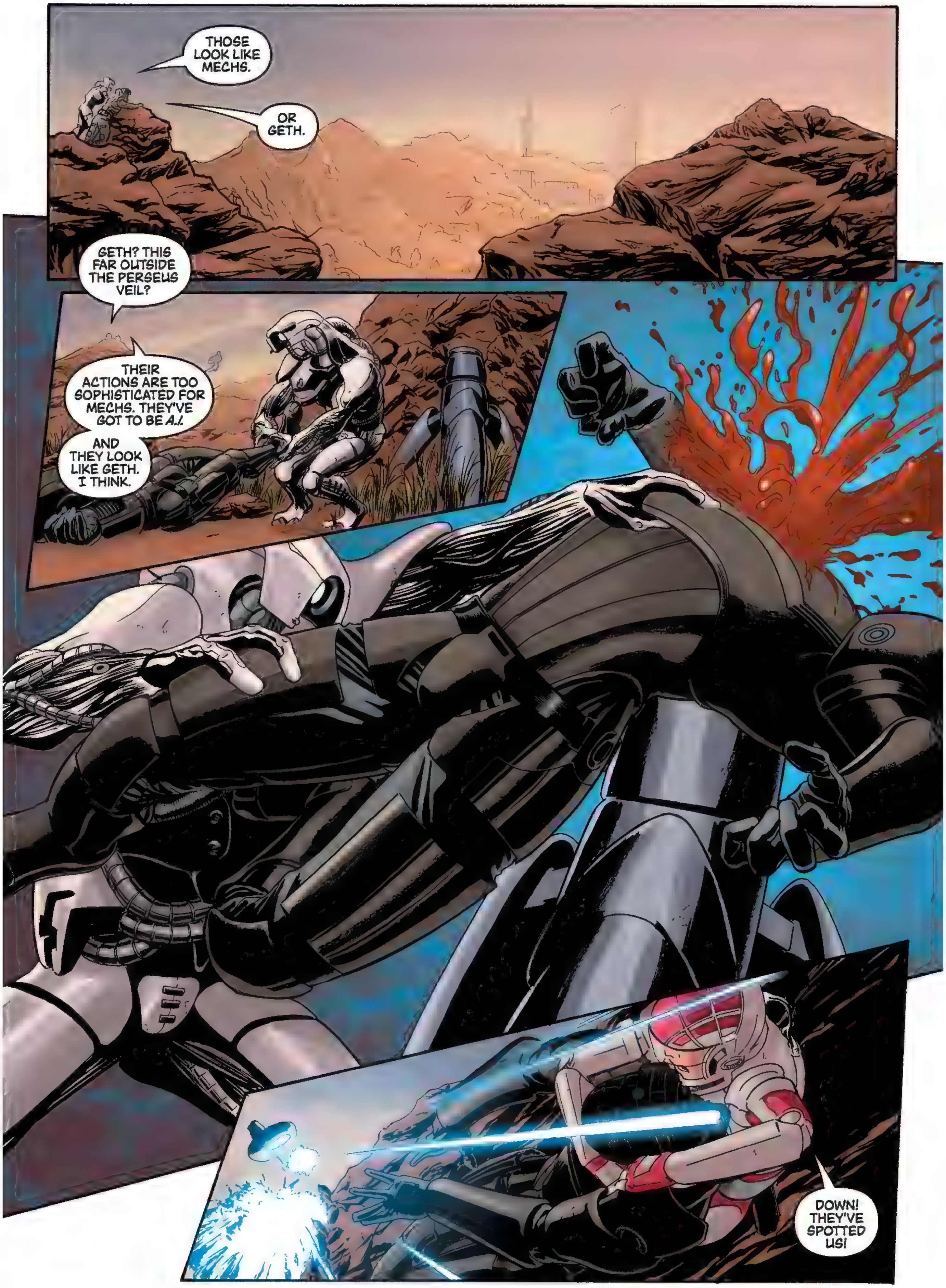

YOU KNOW THE SQUAD DOESN'T THINK THAT ABOUT YOU.
YOU GOT THE BIGGEST BALLS OF ANYONE IN OUR WHOLE PLATOON. AND YOU KEEP YOUR HEAD ON STRAIGHT WHEN THINGS GO CRAZY.
YOU STICK AROUND, EVENTUALLY SOMEBODY'S GONNA RECOGNIZE THAT.
YOU STILL TRYING TO GET ME TO SLEEP WITH YOU?
SURE, BUT IT DOESN'T MEAN I DON'T MEAN IT.
WHO KNOWS, DONKEY, MAYBE ONE DAY WE'LL BOTH GET LUCKY.
LUCK IS FOR THE LONELY, ASH. WE'RE A TEAM. WE'VE GOT EACH OTHER.
AND THIS TEAM'S GOT A LONG HAUL AHEAD.
HA! WE ALWAYS GET THE SHIT JOBS, CHIEF, YOU KNOW THAT—
—WE'RE DOG SQUAD!
ARRROOOO!

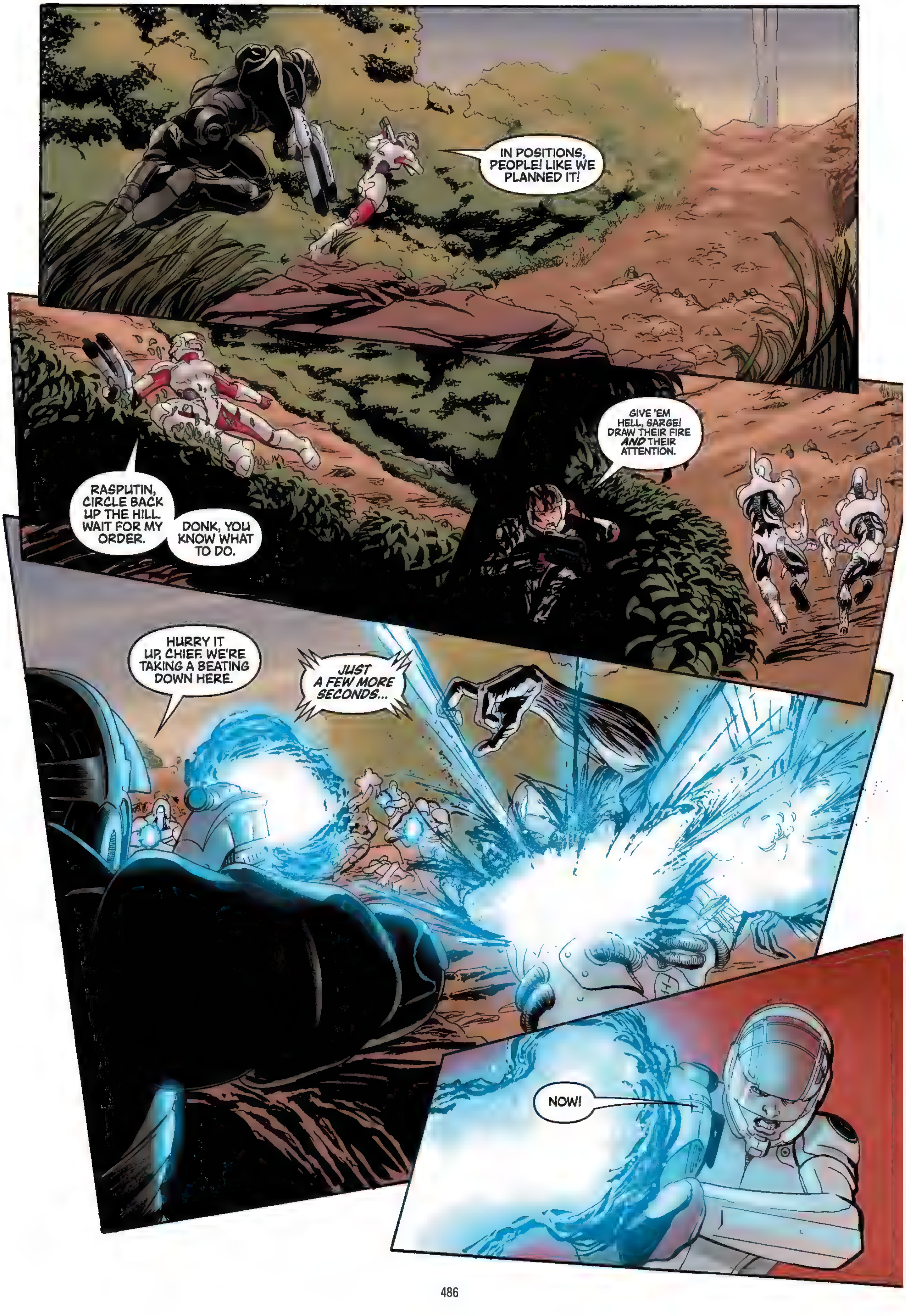

SO, AT THAT POINT THERE WAS NO INDICATION SOMETHING WAS WRONG?
NO. EDEN PRIME'S A SOFT POST. YOU DON'T EXPECT MUCH ACTION. EVER.
YOU SAID THREE OTHER SQUADS WERE SENT AHEAD. HOW MANY MEN IN TOTAL?
THIRTY-ONE... INCLUDING ME.
I KNOW THIS IS HARD, CHIEF -- BUT WE SHOULD CONTINUE. WHEN WERE THE FIRST SIGNS OF TROUBLE?
IT WASN'T UNTIL OUR SECOND NIGHT. WE WERE SUPPOSED TO RENDEZVOUS WITH BRAVO SQUAD. BUT WE COULDN'T HAIL THEM...

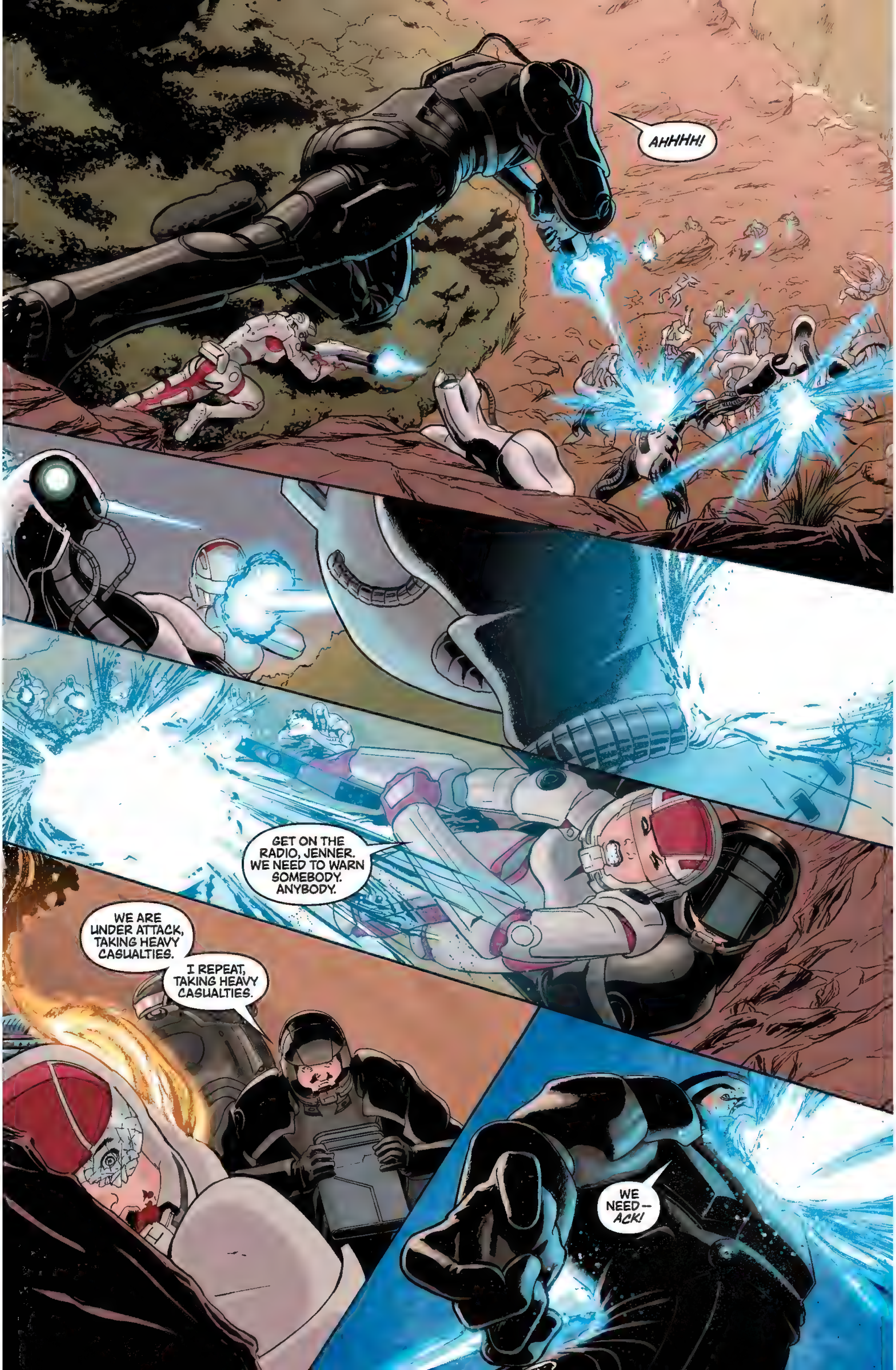

I DON'T LIKE IT. SOMETHING'S WRONG.
YOU ALWAYS THINK THAT, BATES.
THEY SHOULD BE HERE BY NOW. WE SHOULD'VE HEARD FROM THEM.
HEY, SARGE. DID YOU GET THROUGH TO THEM?
NEGATIVE. ABLE AND CHARLIE ARE AT THE DIG SITE, BUT THEY HAVEN'T HEARD FROM BRAVO SINCE NINETEEN HUNDRED.
I DIDN'T NEED TO KNOW THAT.
SIT TIGHT. GIMME A SECOND TO SCAN THE AREA.
NO SIGNS OF LIFE, BUT--
--HOLD ON. I SEE SOMETHIN'.

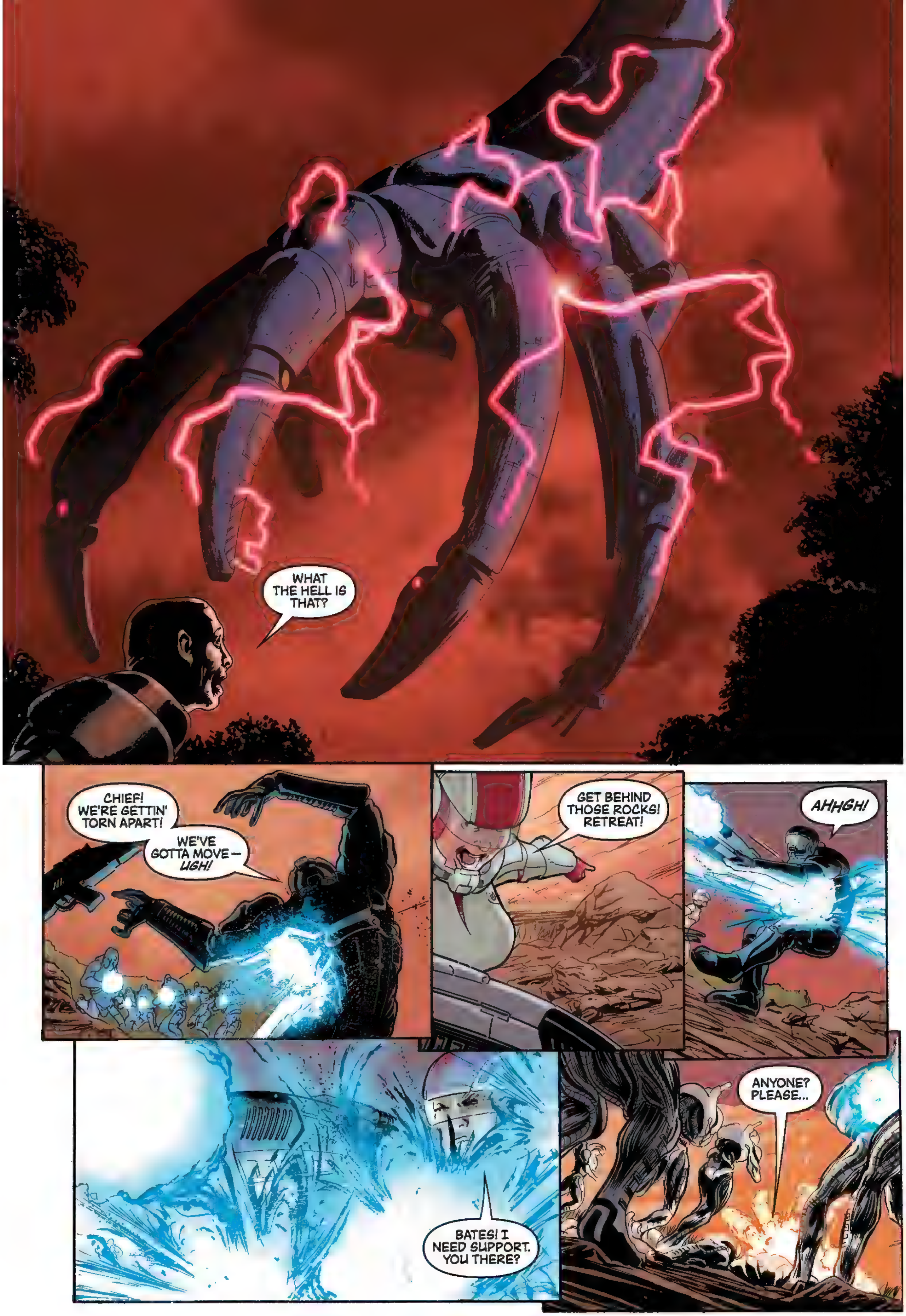

SHIT. IT'S BRAVO TEAM --
-- OR WHAT'S LEFT OF THEM.
IT'S ALL CLEAR. WHATEVER TOOK 'EM OUT IS LONG GONE.
I WANT A FULL SWEEP, TWO BY TWO. PENNY, YOU'RE WITH ME. ASH WITH BATES.
FLASHLIGHTS ON. CHECK YOUR TARGETS. WE MAY STILL HAVE FRIENDLIES OUT THERE.
LOOKS LIKE THEY DIDN'T EVEN HAVE A CHANCE TO DRAW THEIR WEAPONS.
I KNEW HER. WE CAME TO EDEN PRIME ON THE SAME TRANSPORT. OH GOD.
BATES. LOOK AT ME. WE'LL GET THROUGH THIS. OKAY?
STAY CLOSE. I GOT YOUR BACK. OKAY?
YEAH. YES.

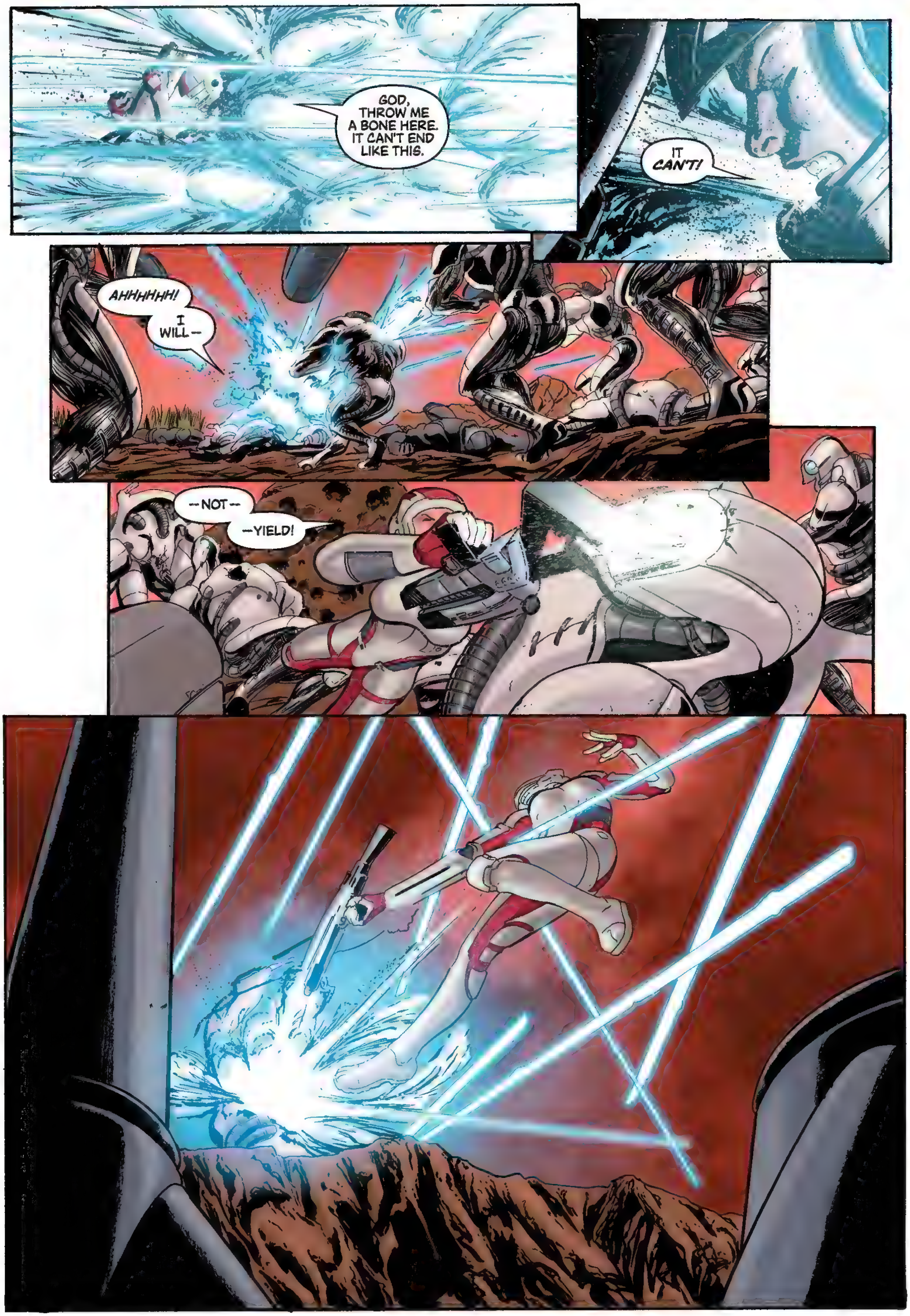

I COUNT FOURTEEN. THAT'S ALL OF BRAVO.
...TAKING FIRE... SHHK... UNKNOWN ENEMY...HHSSK...AT THE BEACON...
OH GOD.
WHAT DO WE DO?
I DON'T KNOW.
YOU DON'T *KNOW?*
LISTEN UP. ASH IS TAKING OVER THE SQUAD.
THIS JUST BECAME A REAL MISSION. WE NEED A REAL LEADER.
WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING FOR BRAVO, BUT WE CAN HELP THE OTHERS. WE'LL HAVE TO DOUBLE-TIME IT TO THE BEACON --
-- BUT WE NEED TO BE SMART ABOUT THIS. DELIBERATE AND DISCIPLINED.
WITH ANY LUCK, WE CATCH THEM OFF GUARD.
EITHER WAY, THEY'RE ABOUT TO FIND OUT WHY DOG SQUAD IS THE BADDEST, MOST DANGEROUS SQUAD ON THIS ROCK!
HOOAH!
THANKS FOR THAT.
DON'T THANK ME YET, DONKEY.

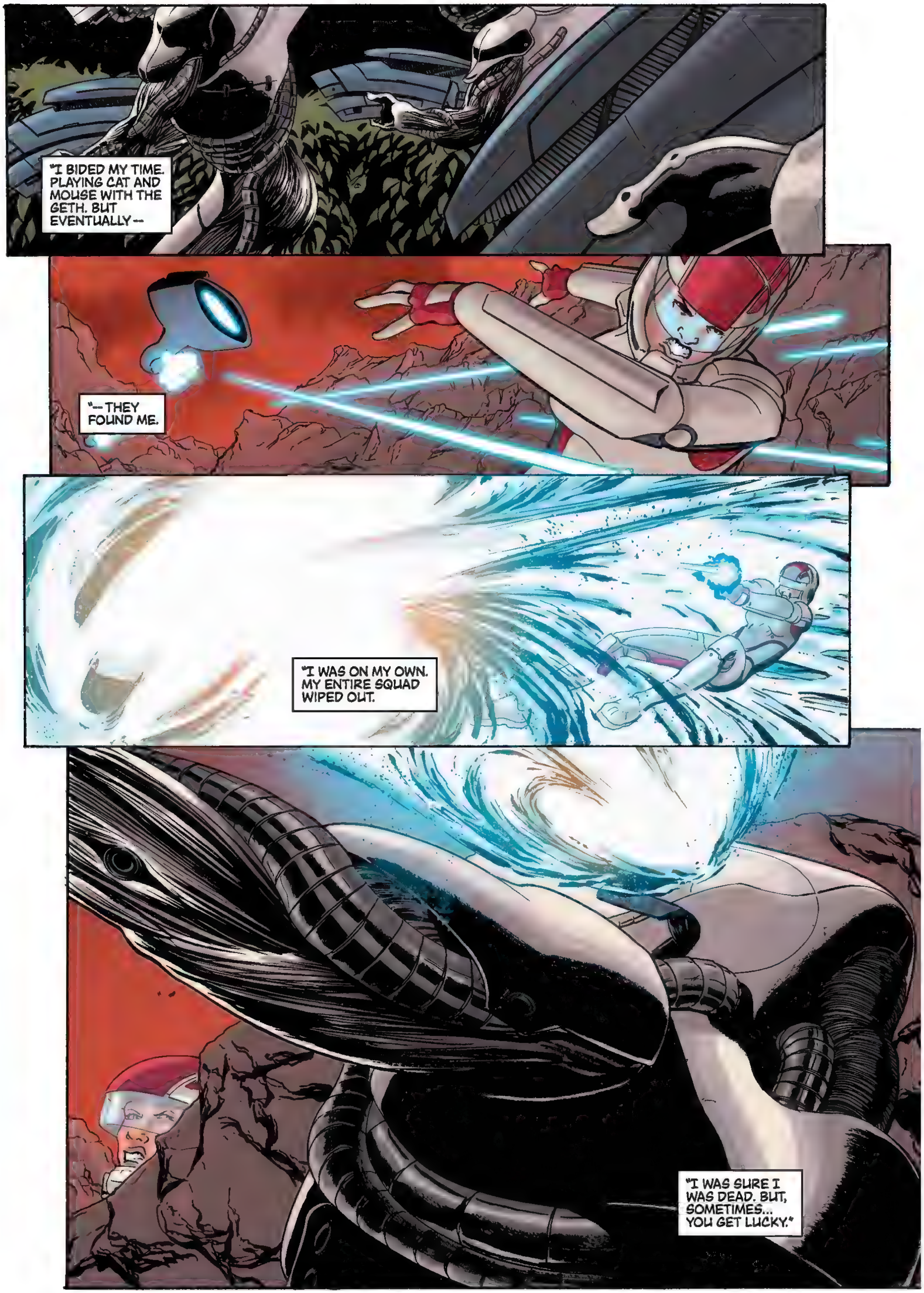

THOSE LOOK LIKE MECHS.
OR GETH.
GETH? THIS FAR OUTSIDE THE PERSEUS VEIL?
THEIR ACTIONS ARE TOO SOPHISTICATED FOR MECHS. THEY'VE GOT TO BE *A.I.*
AND THEY LOOK LIKE GETH. I THINK.
DOWN! THEY'VE SPOTTED US!

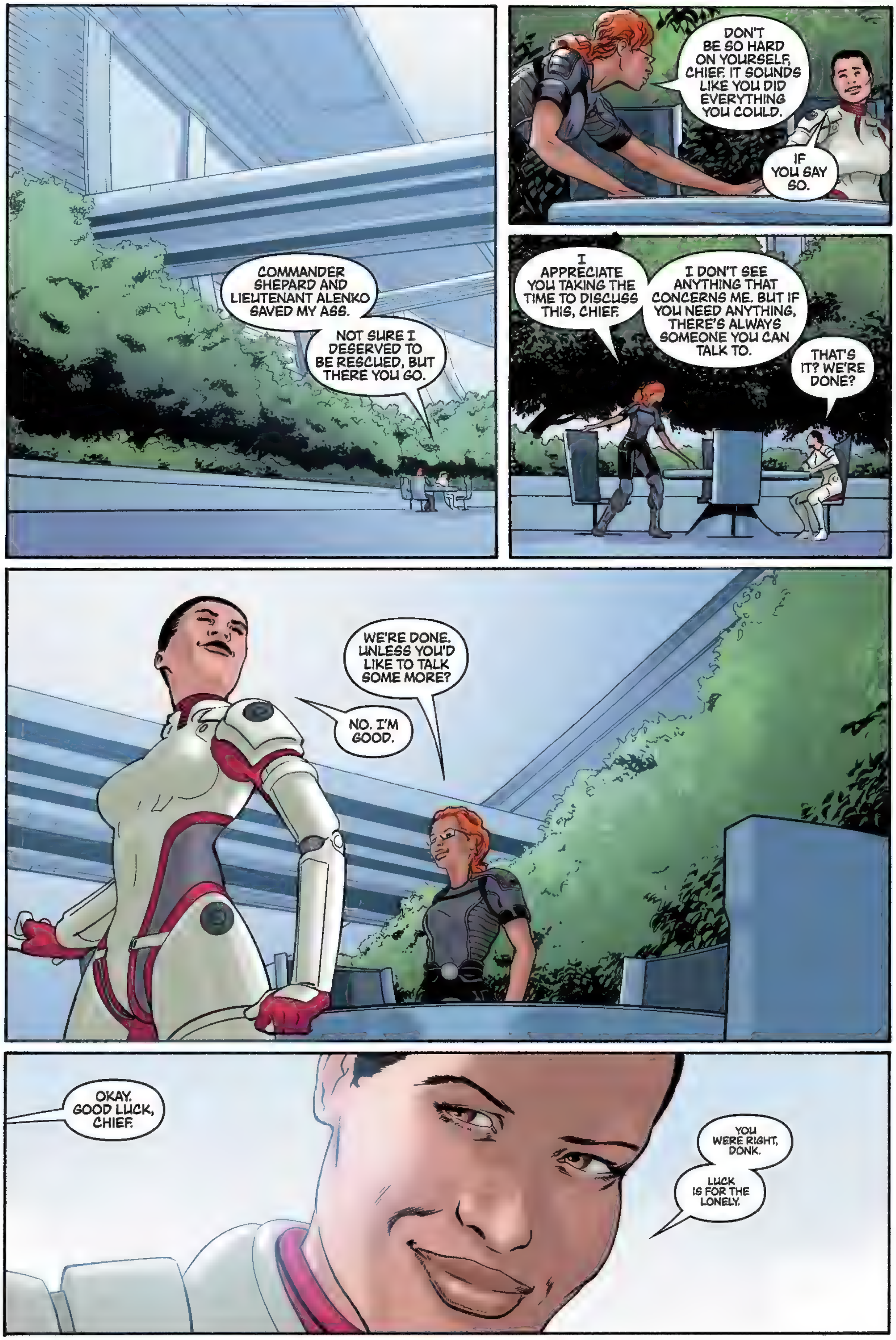

IN POSITIONS, PEOPLE! LIKE WE PLANNED IT!
RASPUTIN, CIRCLE BACK UP THE HILL. WAIT FOR MY ORDER.
DONK, YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.
GIVE 'EM HELL, SARGE! DRAW THEIR FIRE *AND* THEIR ATTENTION.
HURRY IT UP, CHIEF. WE'RE TAKING A BEATING DOWN HERE.
JUST A FEW MORE SECONDS...
NOW!

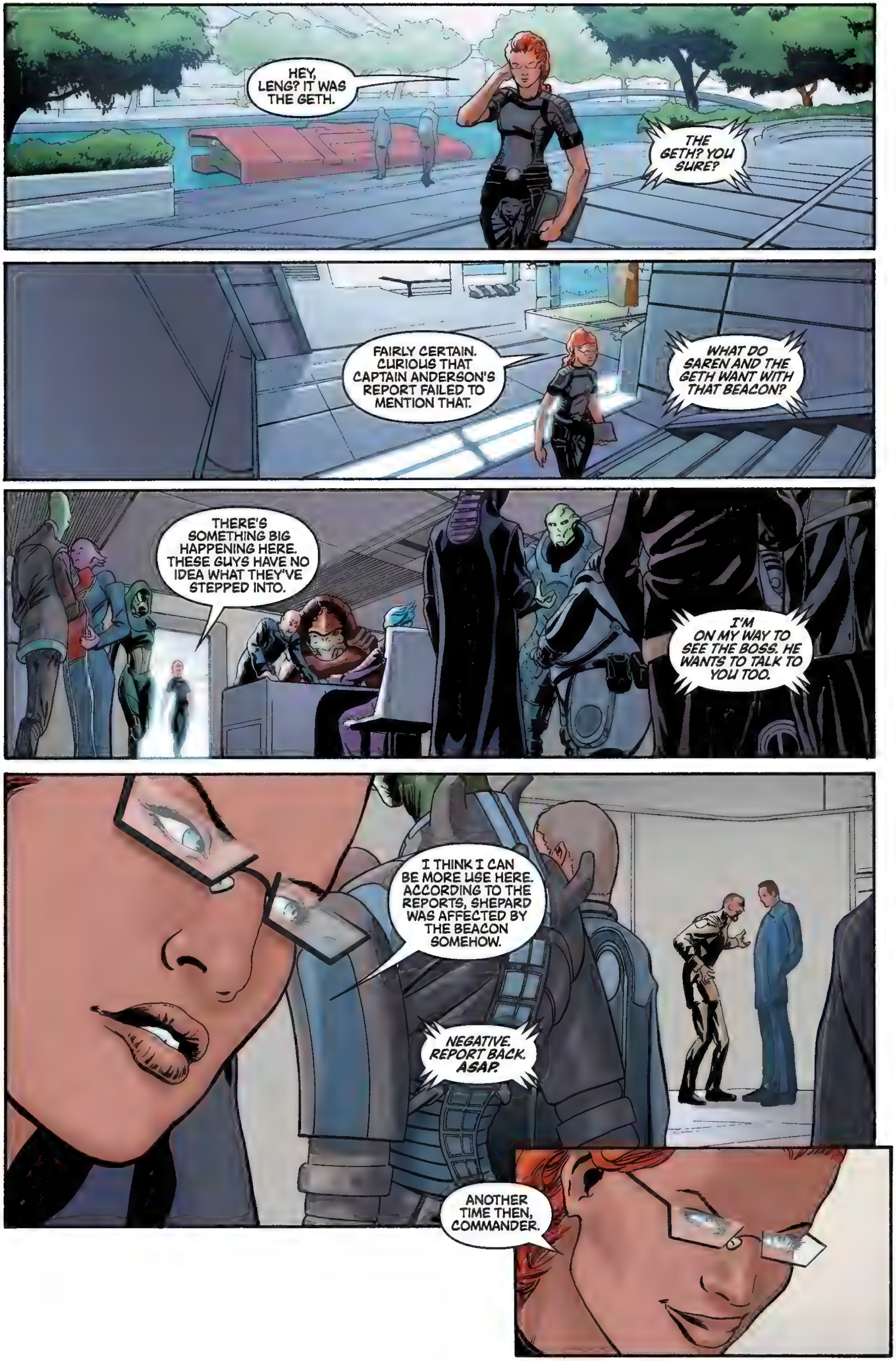

AHHHH!
GET ON THE RADIO, JENNER. WE NEED TO WARN SOMEBODY. ANYBODY.
WE ARE UNDER ATTACK, TAKING HEAVY CASUALTIES.
I REPEAT, TAKING HEAVY CASUALTIES.
WE NEED-- *ACK!*

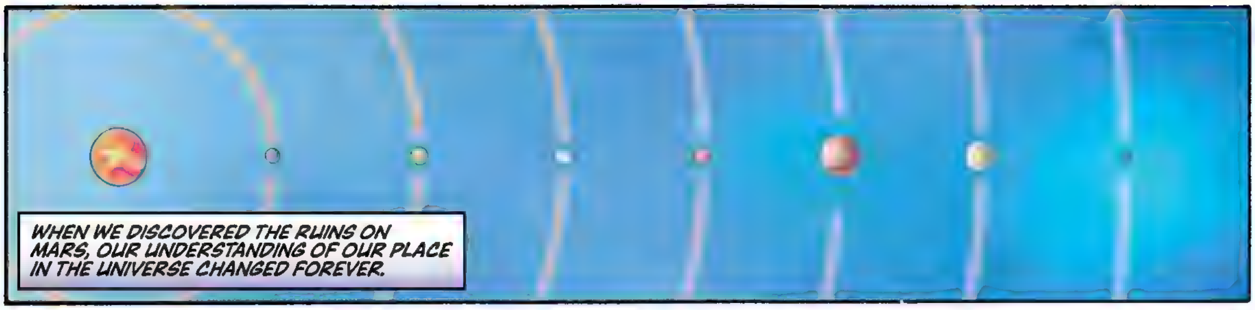

WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?
CHIEF! WE'RE GETTIN' TORN APART!
WE'VE GOTTA MOVE -- *UGH!*
GET BEHIND THOSE ROCKS! RETREAT!
AHHGH!
BATES! I NEED SUPPORT. YOU THERE?
ANYONE? PLEASE...

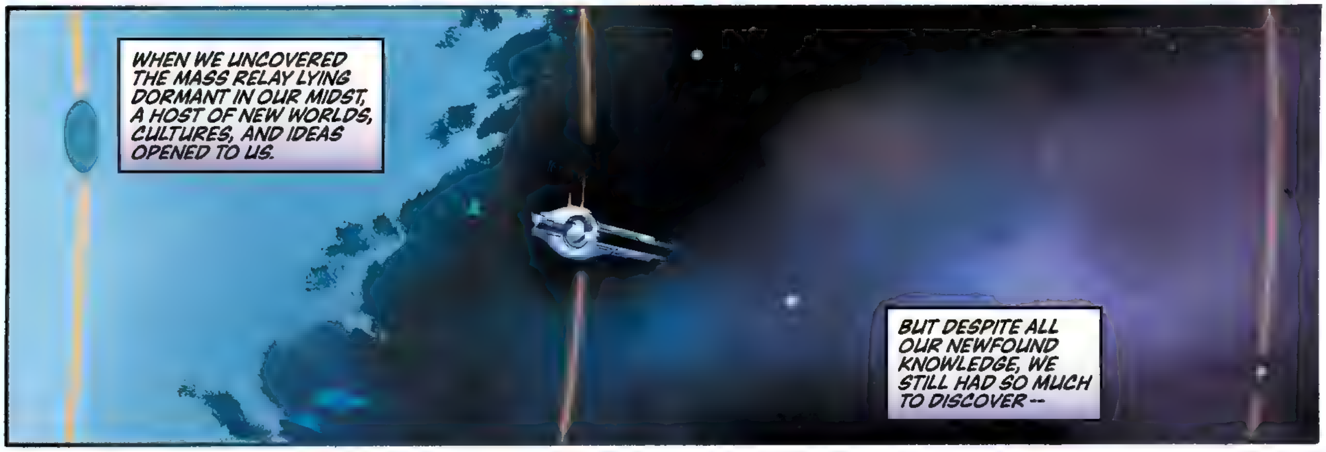

GOD, THROW ME A BONE HERE. IT CAN'T END LIKE THIS.
IT *CAN'T!*
AHHHHHH!
I WILL--
--NOT--
--YIELD!

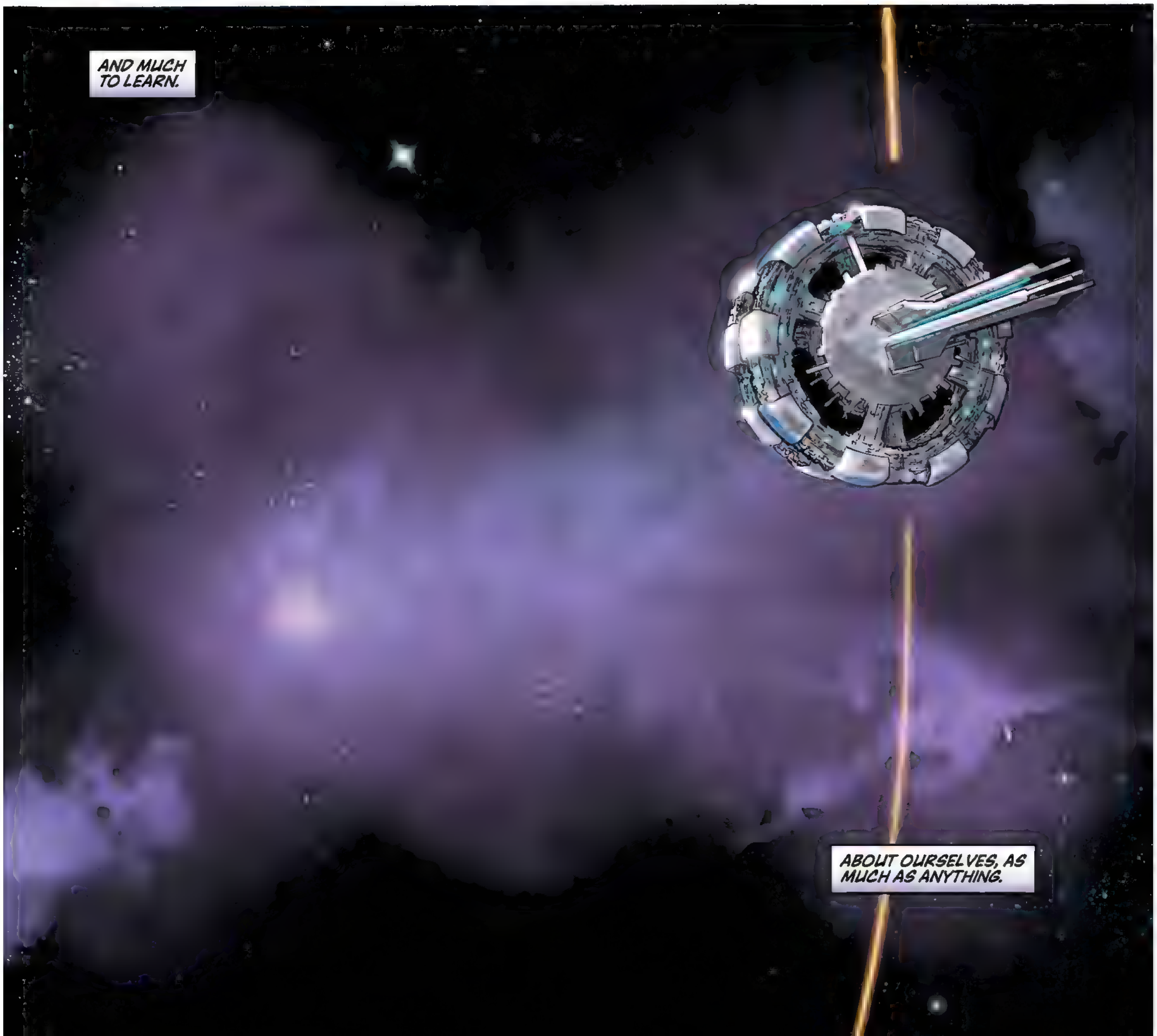

"I BIDED MY TIME. PLAYING CAT AND MOUSE WITH THE GETH. BUT EVENTUALLY--
"--THEY FOUND ME.
"I WAS ON MY OWN. MY ENTIRE SQUAD WIPED OUT.
"I WAS SURE I WAS DEAD. BUT, SOMETIMES... YOU GET LUCKY."

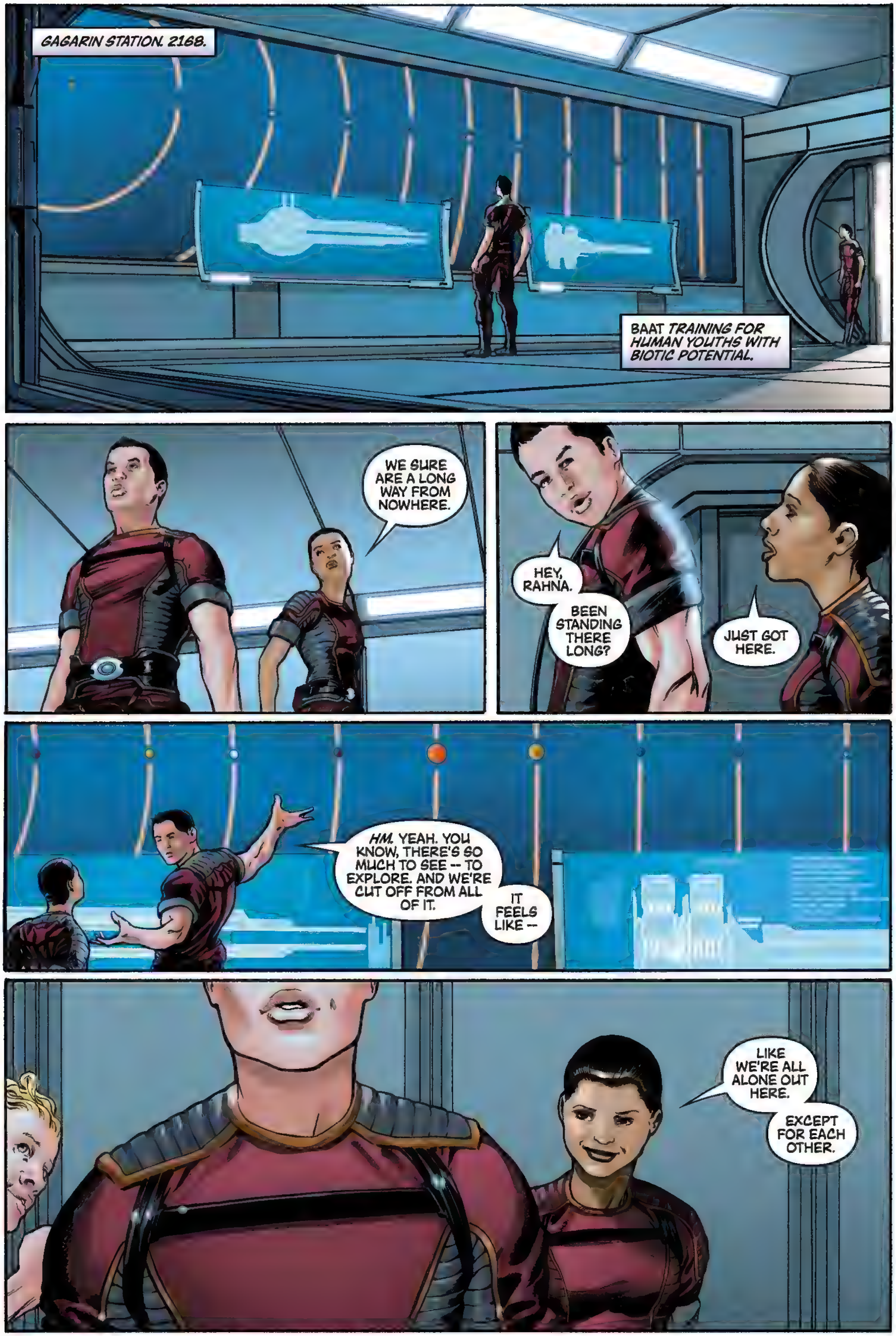

COMMANDER SHEPARD AND LIEUTENANT ALENKO SAVED MY ASS.
NOT SURE I DESERVED TO BE RESCUED, BUT THERE YOU GO.
DON'T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF, CHIEF. IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU DID EVERYTHING YOU COULD.
IF YOU SAY SO.
I APPRECIATE YOU TAKING THE TIME TO DISCUSS THIS, CHIEF.
I DON'T SEE ANYTHING THAT CONCERNS ME. BUT IF YOU NEED ANYTHING, THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEONE YOU CAN TALK TO.
THAT'S IT? WE'RE DONE?
WE'RE DONE. UNLESS YOU'D LIKE TO TALK SOME MORE?
NO. I'M GOOD.
OKAY. GOOD LUCK, CHIEF.
YOU WERE RIGHT, DONK.
LUCK IS FOR THE LONELY.

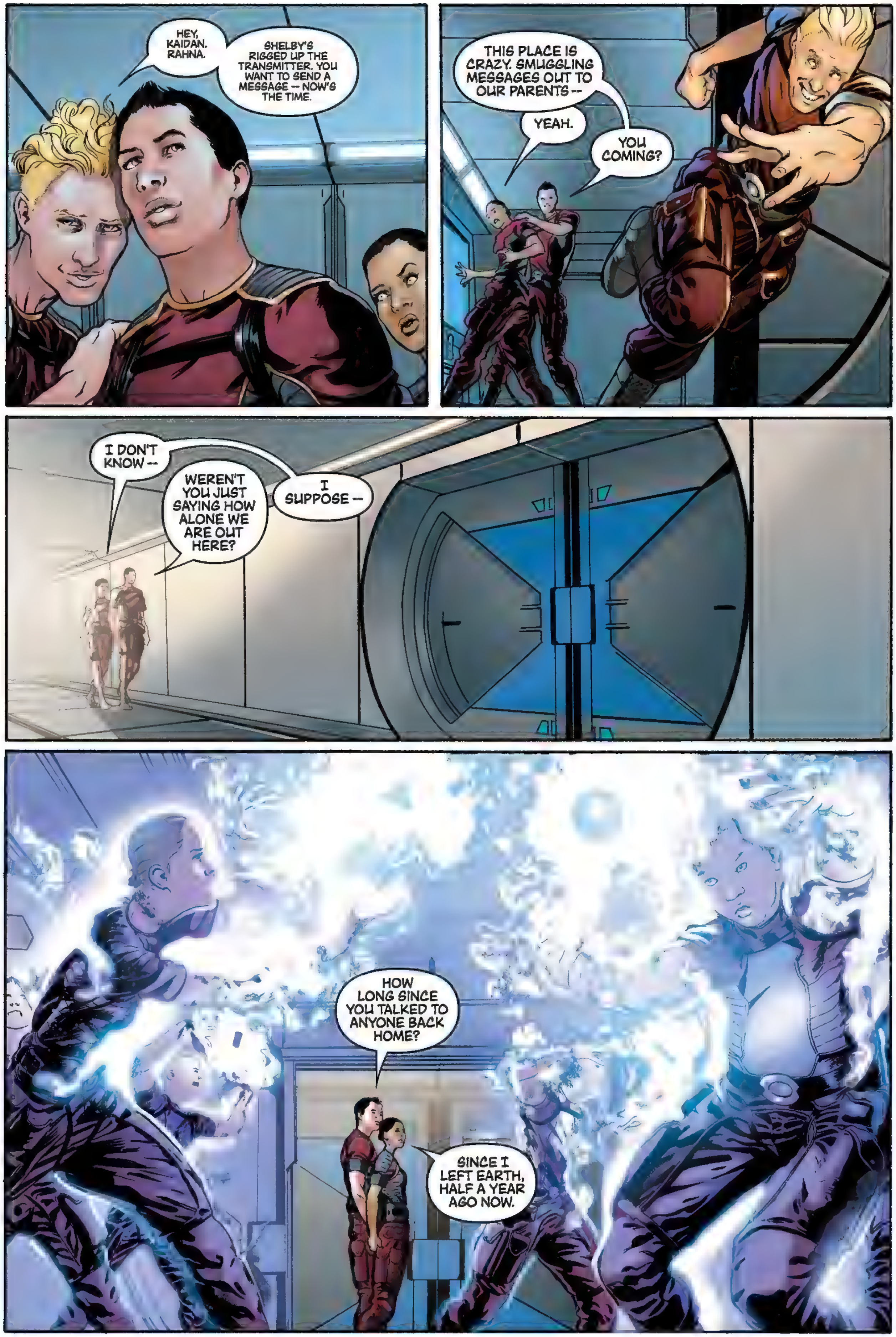

HEY, LENG? IT WAS THE GETH.
THE GETH? YOU SURE?
FAIRLY CERTAIN. CURIOUS THAT CAPTAIN ANDERSON'S REPORT FAILED TO MENTION THAT.
WHAT DO SAREN AND THE GETH WANT WITH THAT BEACON?
THERE'S SOMETHING BIG HAPPENING HERE. THESE GUYS HAVE NO IDEA WHAT THEY'VE STEPPED INTO.
I'M ON MY WAY TO SEE THE BOSS. HE WANTS TO TALK TO YOU TOO.
I THINK I CAN BE MORE USE HERE. ACCORDING TO THE REPORTS, SHEPARD WAS AFFECTED BY THE BEACON SOMEHOW.
NEGATIVE. REPORT BACK. ASAP.
ANOTHER TIME THEN, COMMANDER.

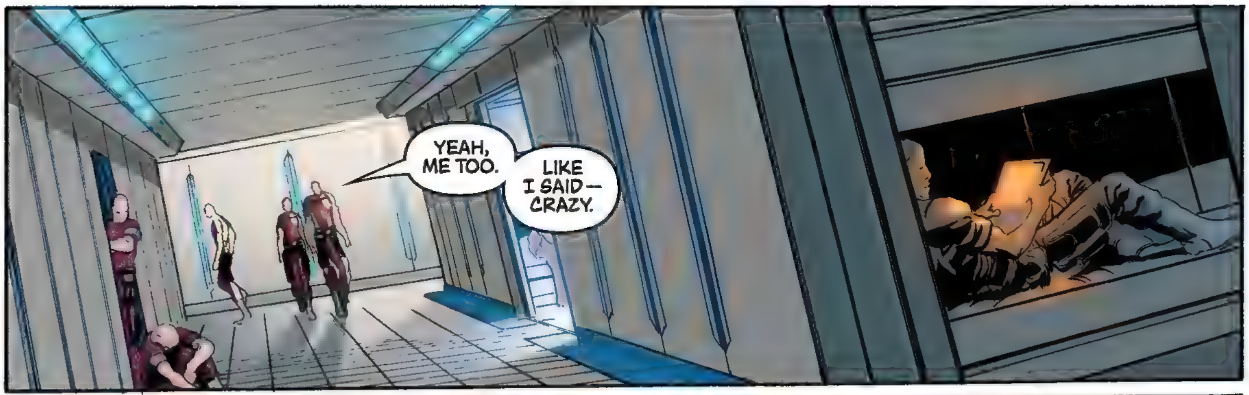

WHEN WE DISCOVERED THE RUINS ON MARS, OUR UNDERSTANDING OF OUR PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE CHANGED FOREVER.

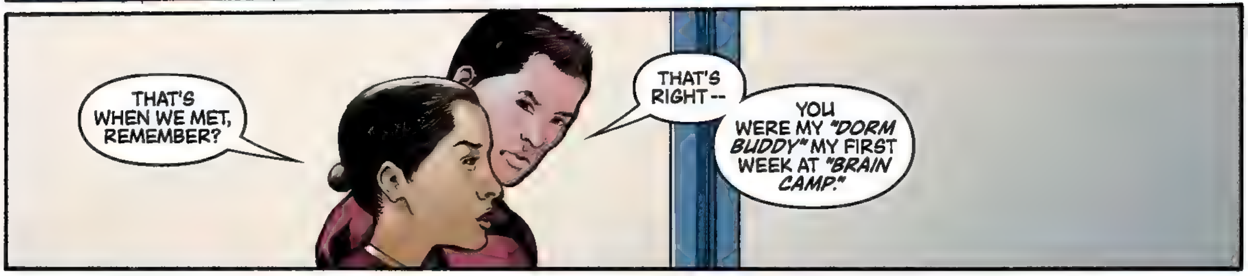

WHEN WE UNCOVERED THE MASS RELAY LYING DORMANT IN OUR MIDST, A HOST OF NEW WORLDS, CULTURES, AND IDEAS OPENED TO US.
BUT DESPITE ALL OUR NEWFOUND KNOWLEDGE, WE STILL HAD SO MUCH TO DISCOVER --

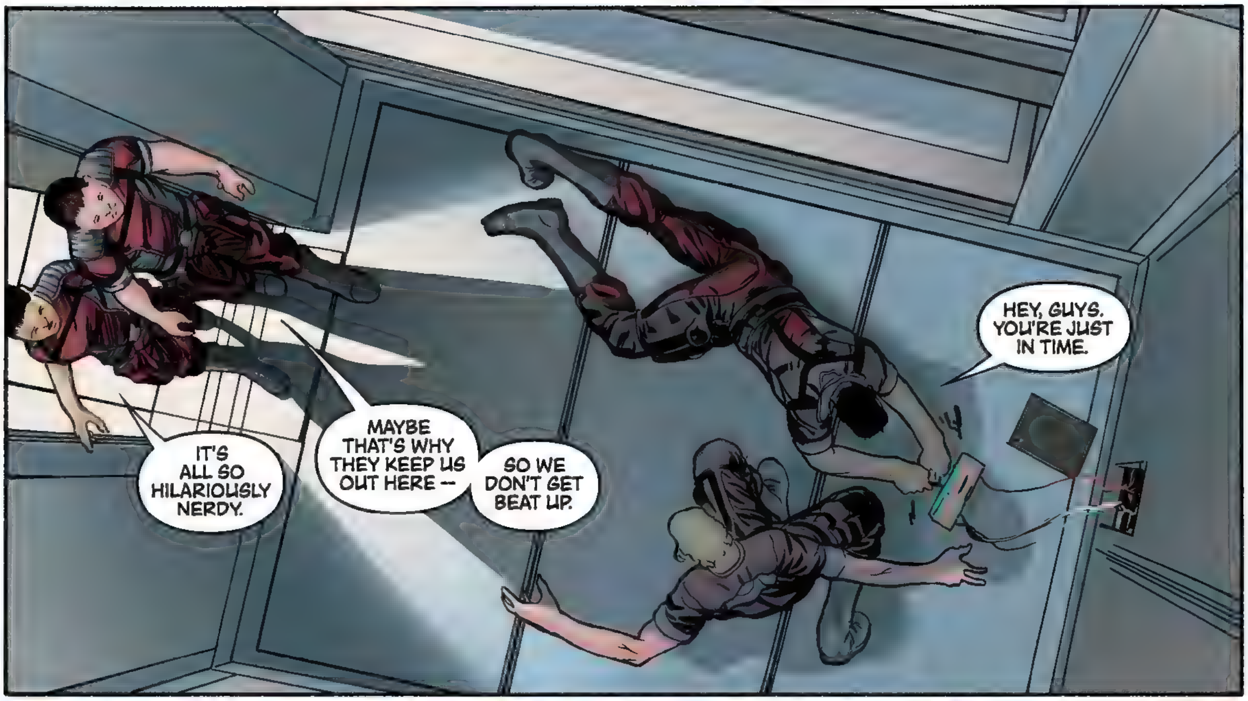

AND MUCH TO LEARN.
ABOUT OURSELVES, AS MUCH AS ANYTHING.

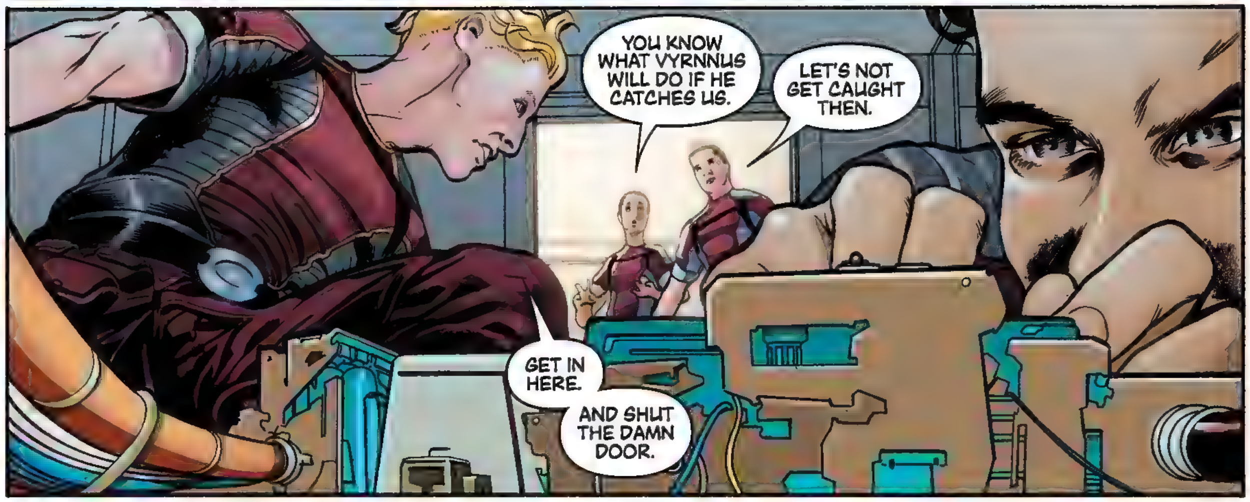

GAGARIN STATION. 2168.
BAAT *TRAINING FOR HUMAN YOUTHS WITH BIOTIC POTENTIAL.*
WE SURE ARE A LONG WAY FROM NOWHERE.
HEY, RAHNA.
BEEN STANDING THERE LONG?
JUST GOT HERE.
HM. YEAH. YOU KNOW, THERE'S SO MUCH TO SEE -- TO EXPLORE. AND WE'RE CUT OFF FROM ALL OF IT.
IT FEELS LIKE --
LIKE WE'RE ALL ALONE OUT HERE.
EXCEPT FOR EACH OTHER.

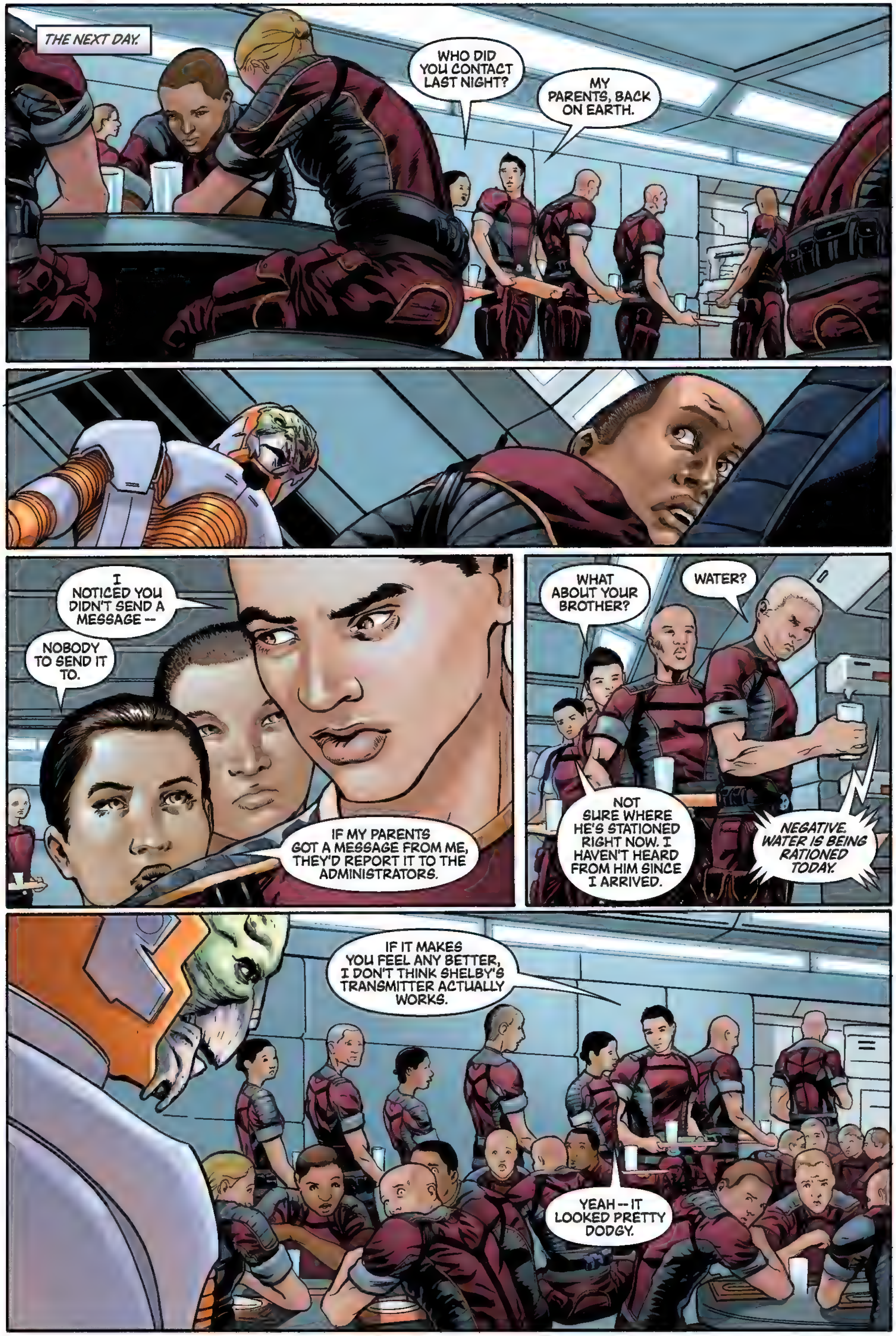

HEY, KAIDAN. RAHNA.
SHELBY'S RIGGED UP THE TRANSMITTER. YOU WANT TO SEND A MESSAGE -- NOW'S THE TIME.
THIS PLACE IS CRAZY. SMUGGLING MESSAGES OUT TO OUR PARENTS --
YEAH.
YOU COMING?
I DON'T KNOW --
WEREN'T YOU JUST SAYING HOW ALONE WE ARE OUT HERE?
I SUPPOSE --
HOW LONG SINCE YOU TALKED TO ANYONE BACK HOME?
SINCE I LEFT EARTH, HALF A YEAR AGO NOW.

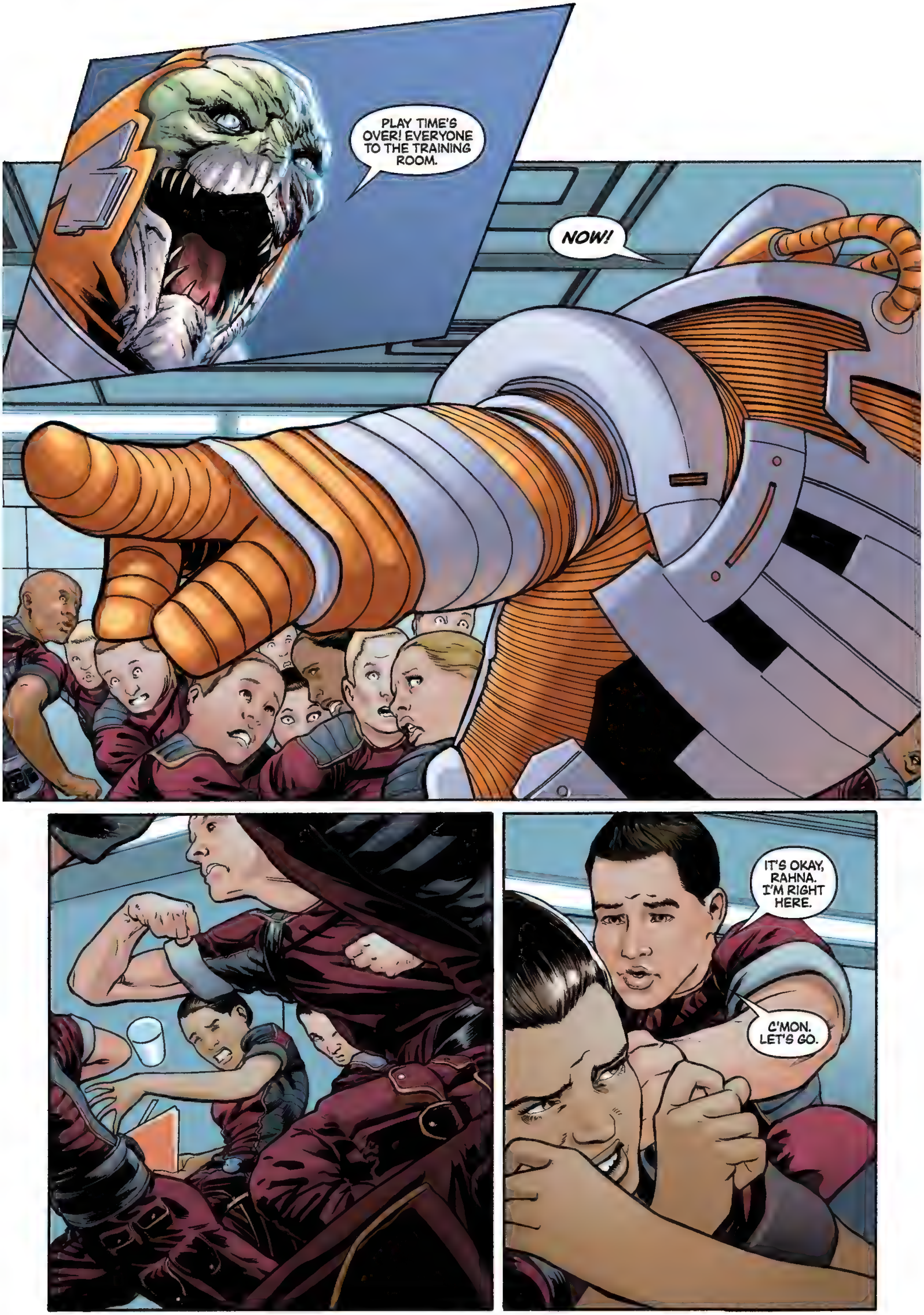

YEAH, ME TOO.
LIKE I SAID -- CRAZY.

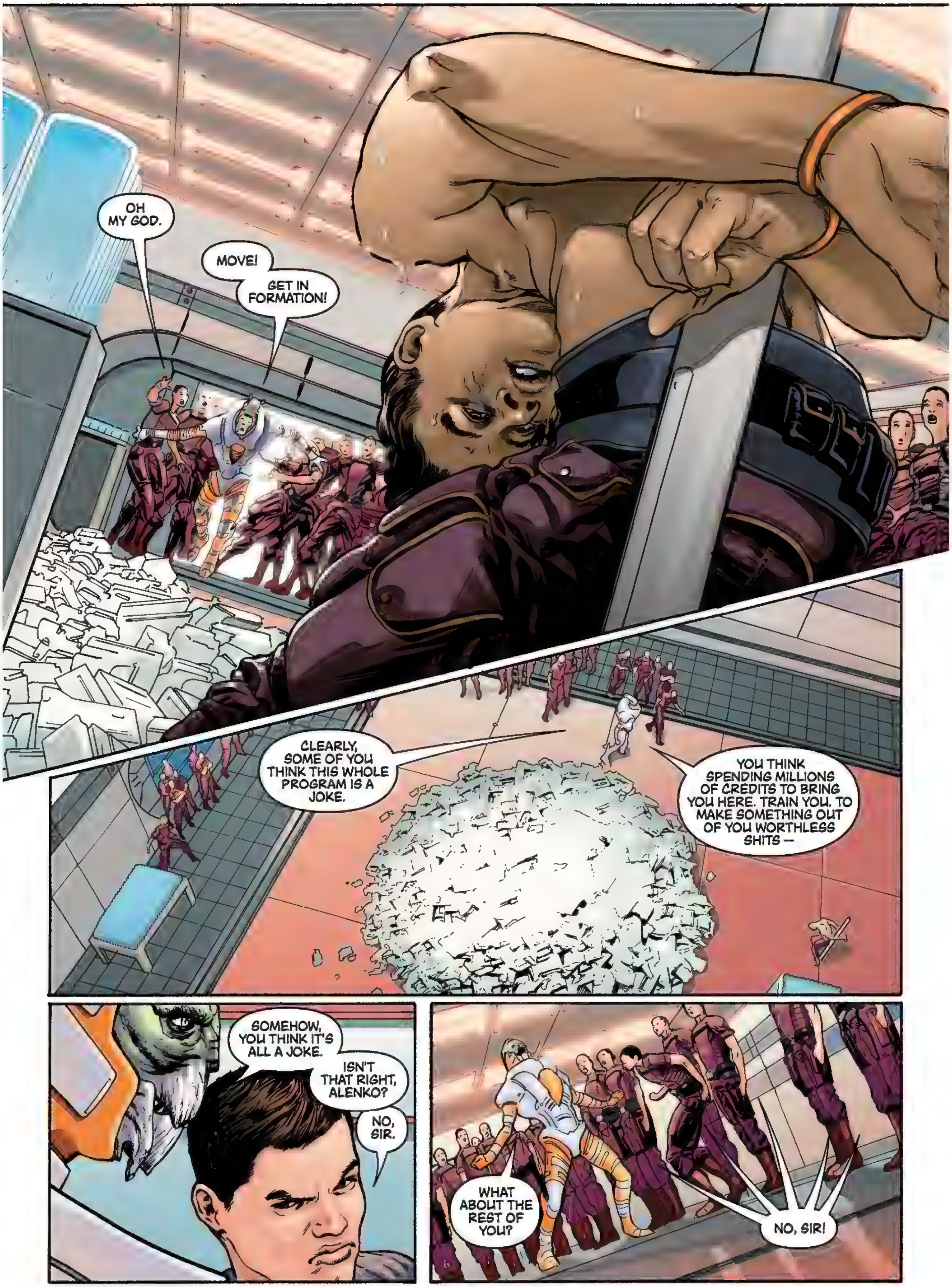

THAT'S WHEN WE MET, REMEMBER?
THAT'S RIGHT --
YOU WERE MY *"DORM BUDDY"* MY FIRST WEEK AT *"BRAIN CAMP."*

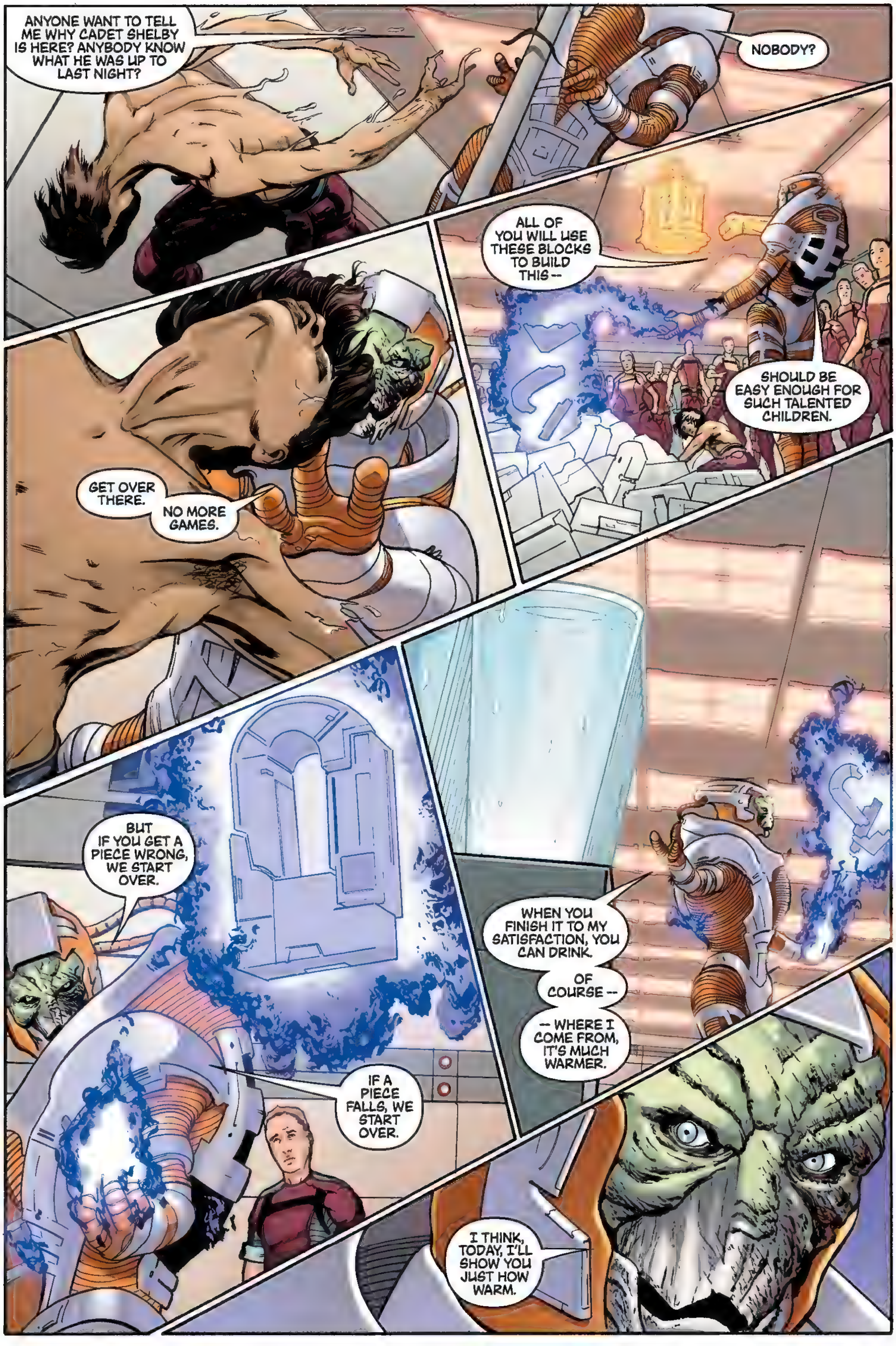

HEY, GUYS. YOU'RE JUST IN TIME.
IT'S ALL SO HILARIOUSLY NERDY.
MAYBE THAT'S WHY THEY KEEP US OUT HERE --
SO WE DON'T GET BEAT UP.

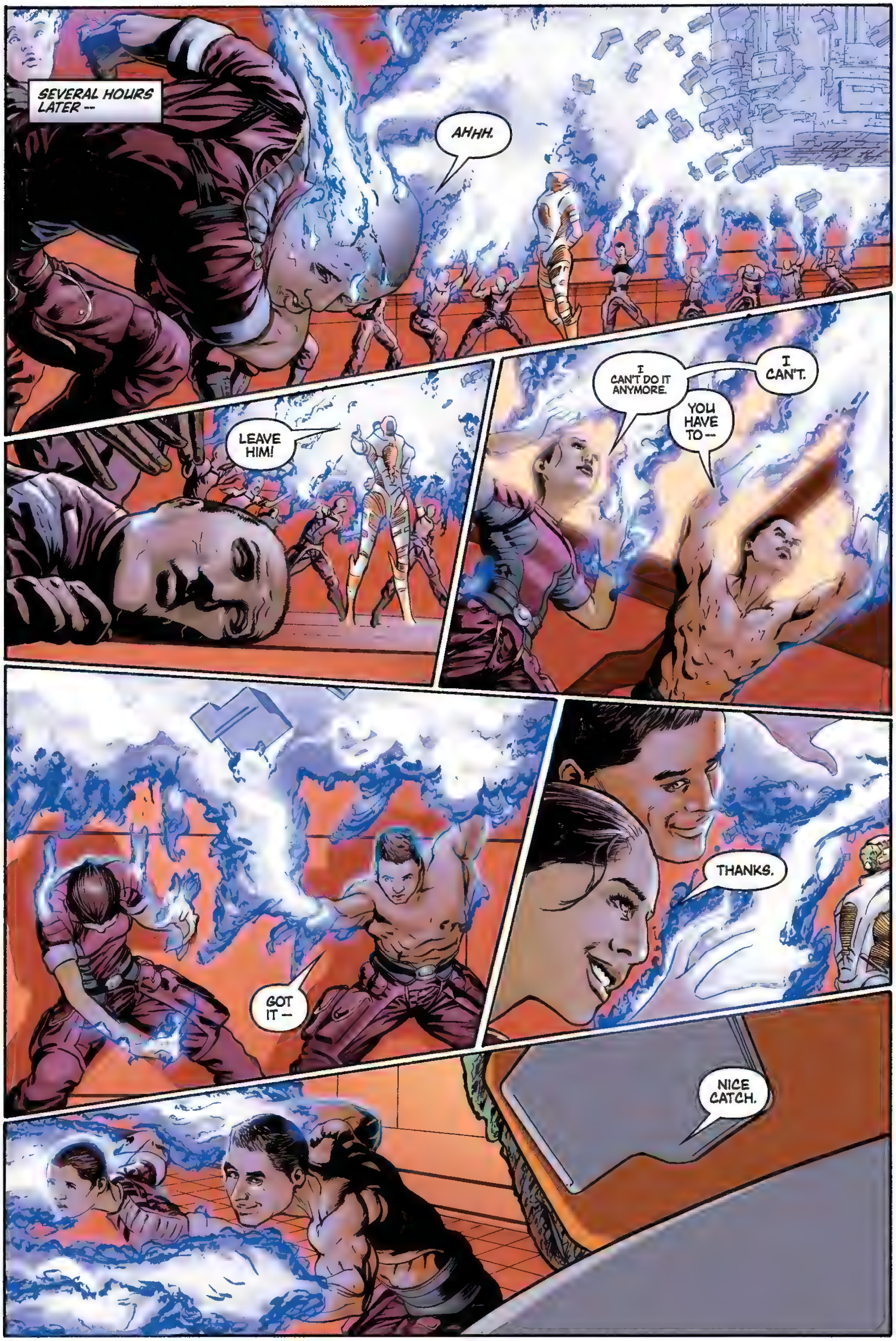

YOU KNOW WHAT VYRNNUS WILL DO IF HE CATCHES US.
LET'S NOT GET CAUGHT THEN.
GET IN HERE.
AND SHUT THE DAMN DOOR.

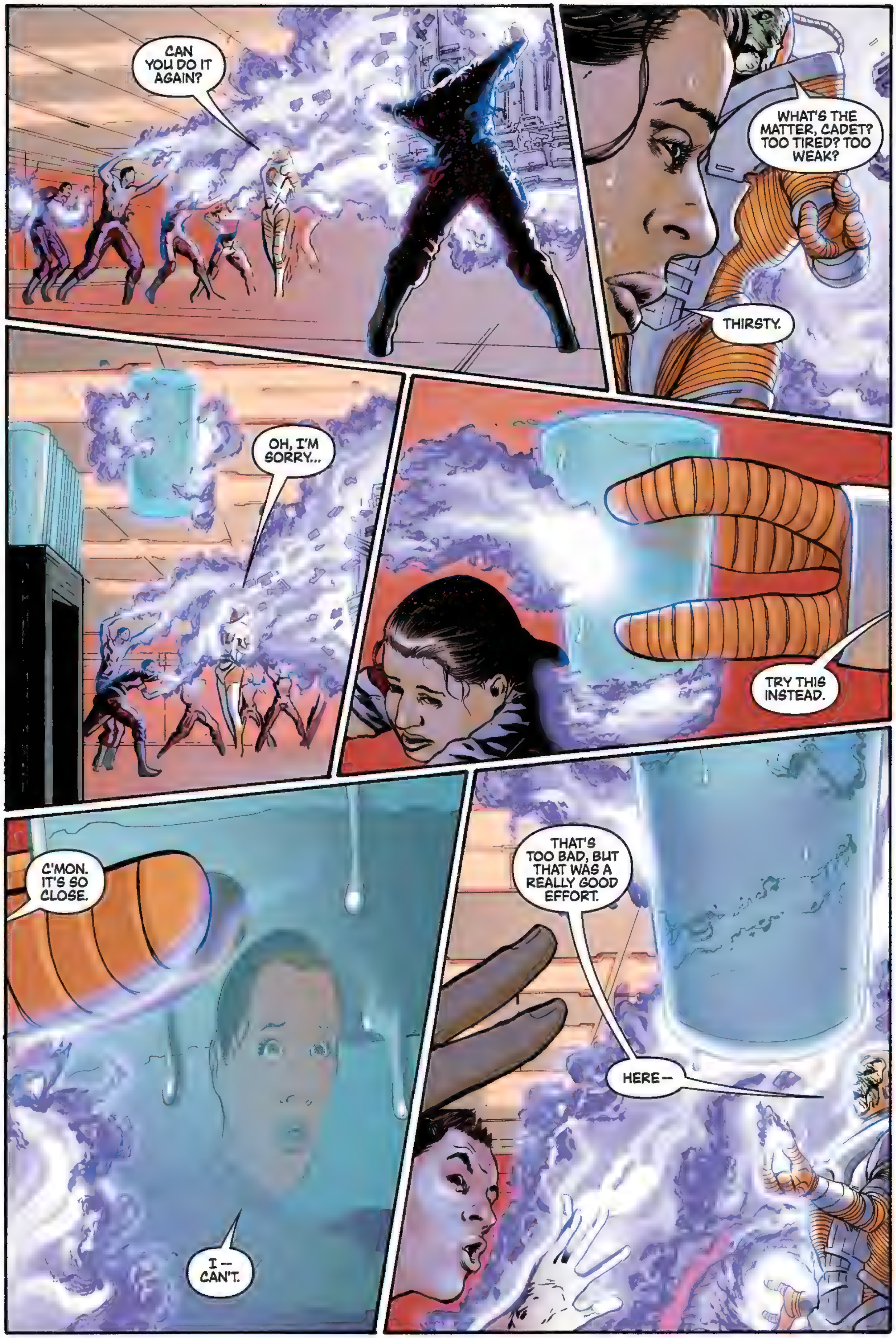

THE NEXT DAY.
WHO DID YOU CONTACT LAST NIGHT?
MY PARENTS, BACK ON EARTH.
I NOTICED YOU DIDN'T SEND A MESSAGE --
NOBODY TO SEND IT TO.
IF MY PARENTS GOT A MESSAGE FROM ME, THEY'D REPORT IT TO THE ADMINISTRATORS.
WHAT ABOUT YOUR BROTHER?
WATER?
NOT SURE WHERE HE'S STATIONED RIGHT NOW. I HAVEN'T HEARD FROM HIM SINCE I ARRIVED.
NEGATIVE. WATER IS BEING RATIONED TODAY.
IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL ANY BETTER, I DON'T THINK SHELBY'S TRANSMITTER ACTUALLY WORKS.
YEAH -- IT LOOKED PRETTY DODGY.

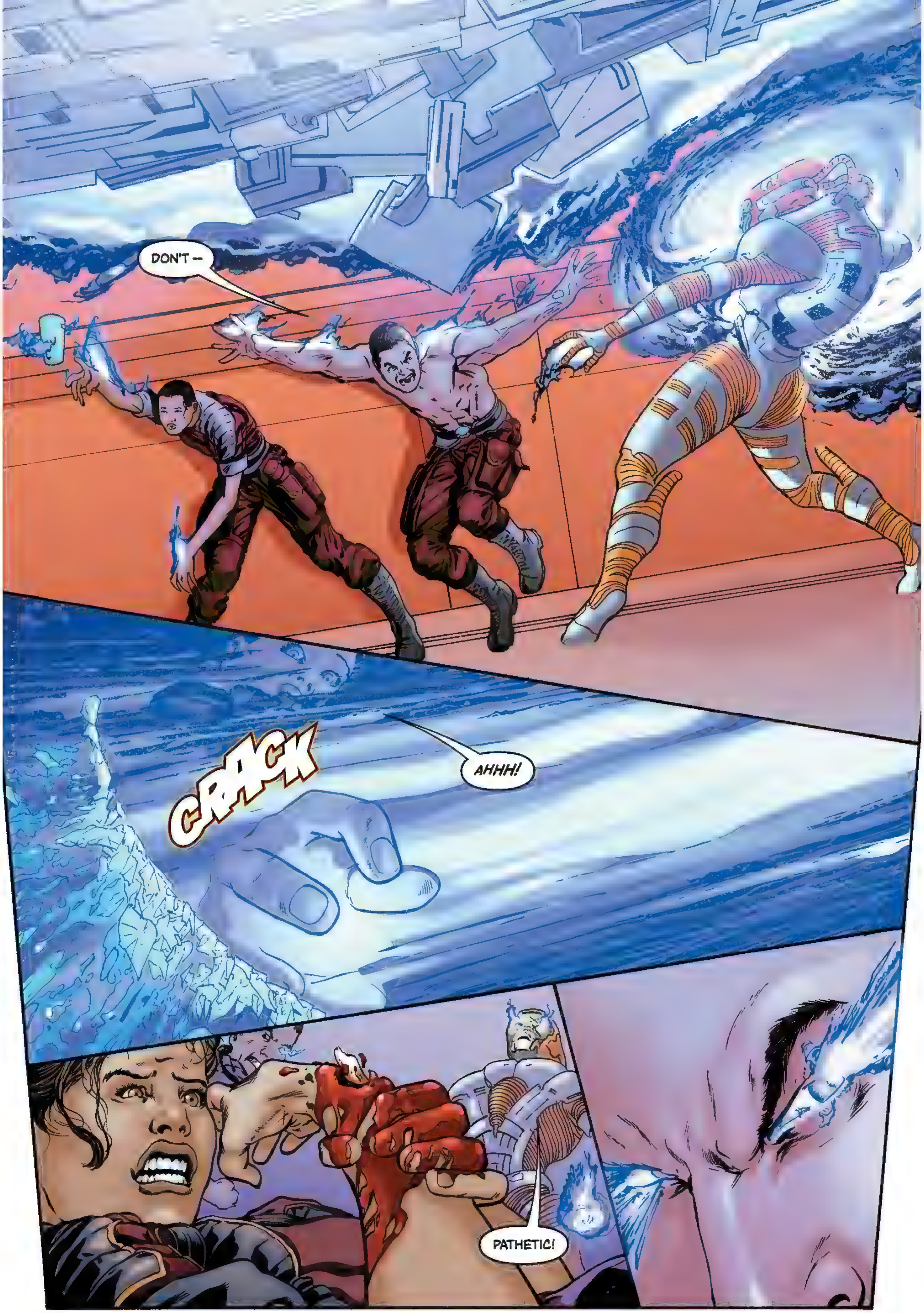

PLAY TIME'S OVER! EVERYONE TO THE TRAINING ROOM.
NOW!
IT'S OKAY, RAHNA. I'M RIGHT HERE.
C'MON. LET'S GO.

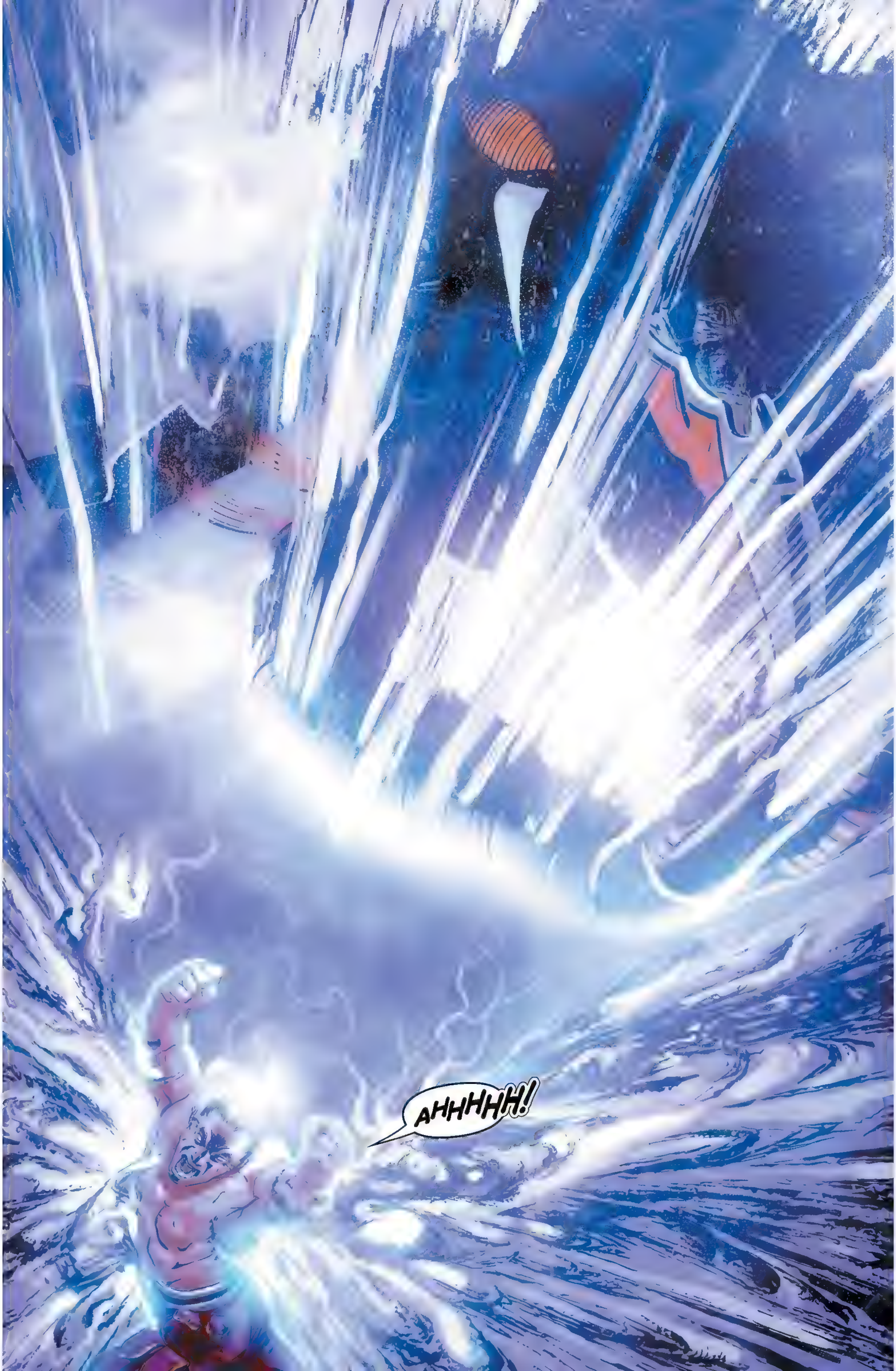

OH MY GOD.
MOVE!
GET IN FORMATION!
CLEARLY, SOME OF YOU THINK THIS WHOLE PROGRAM IS A JOKE.
YOU THINK SPENDING MILLIONS OF CREDITS TO BRING YOU HERE, TRAIN YOU, TO MAKE SOMETHING OUT OF YOU WORTHLESS SHITS --
SOMEHOW, YOU THINK IT'S ALL A JOKE.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT, ALENKO?
NO, SIR.
WHAT ABOUT THE REST OF YOU?
NO, SIR!

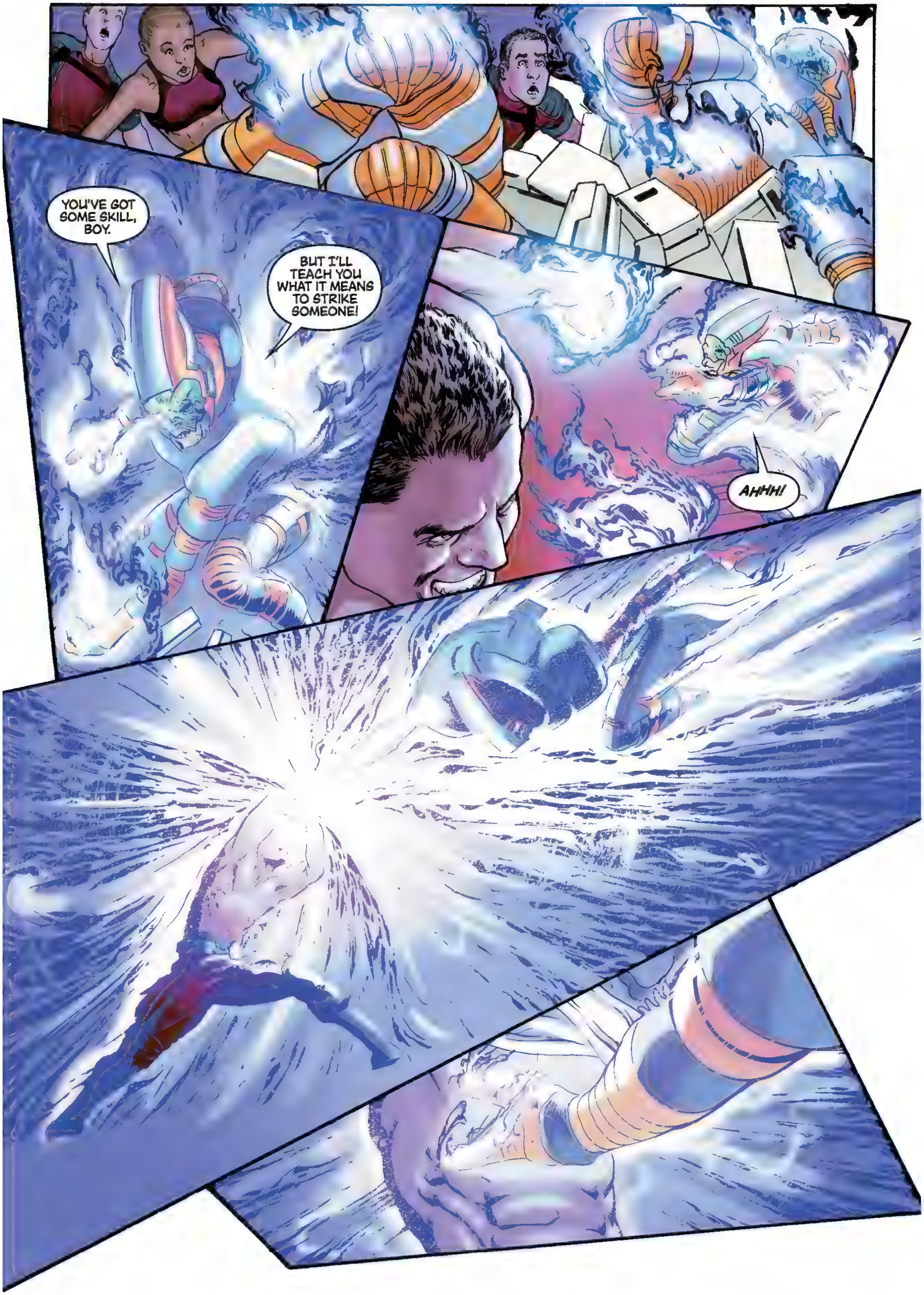

ANYONE WANT TO TELL ME WHY CADET SHELBY IS HERE? ANYBODY KNOW WHAT HE WAS UP TO LAST NIGHT?
NOBODY?
ALL OF YOU WILL USE THESE BLOCKS TO BUILD THIS --
SHOULD BE EASY ENOUGH FOR SUCH TALENTED CHILDREN.
GET OVER THERE.
NO MORE GAMES.
BUT IF YOU GET A PIECE WRONG, WE START OVER.
IF A PIECE FALLS, WE START OVER.
WHEN YOU FINISH IT TO MY SATISFACTION, YOU CAN DRINK.
OF COURSE --
-- WHERE I COME FROM, IT'S MUCH WARMER.
I THINK, TODAY, I'LL SHOW YOU JUST HOW WARM.

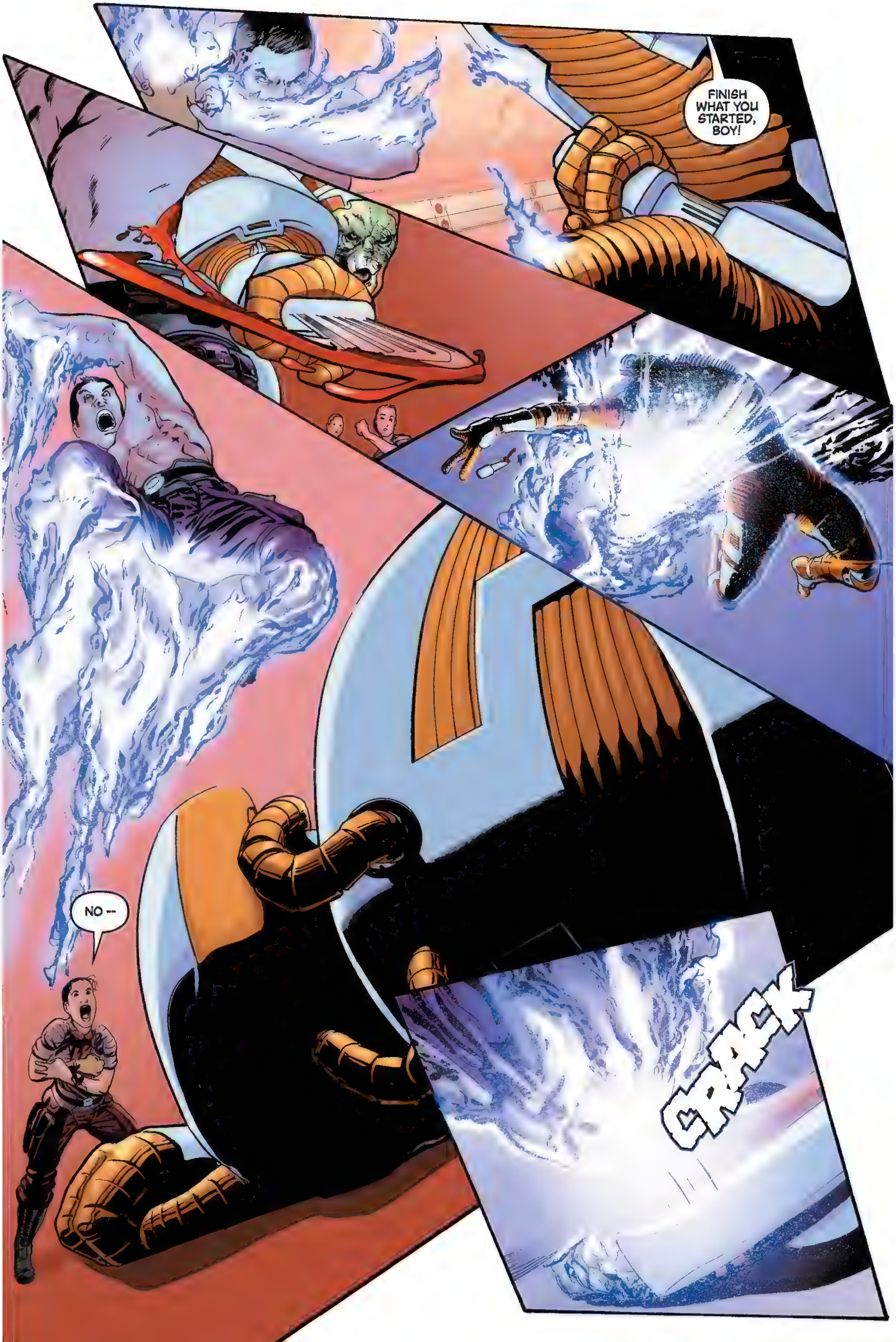

SEVERAL HOURS LATER --
AHHH.
LEAVE HIM!
I CAN'T DO IT ANYMORE.
I CAN'T.
YOU HAVE TO --
GOT IT --
THANKS.
NICE CATCH.

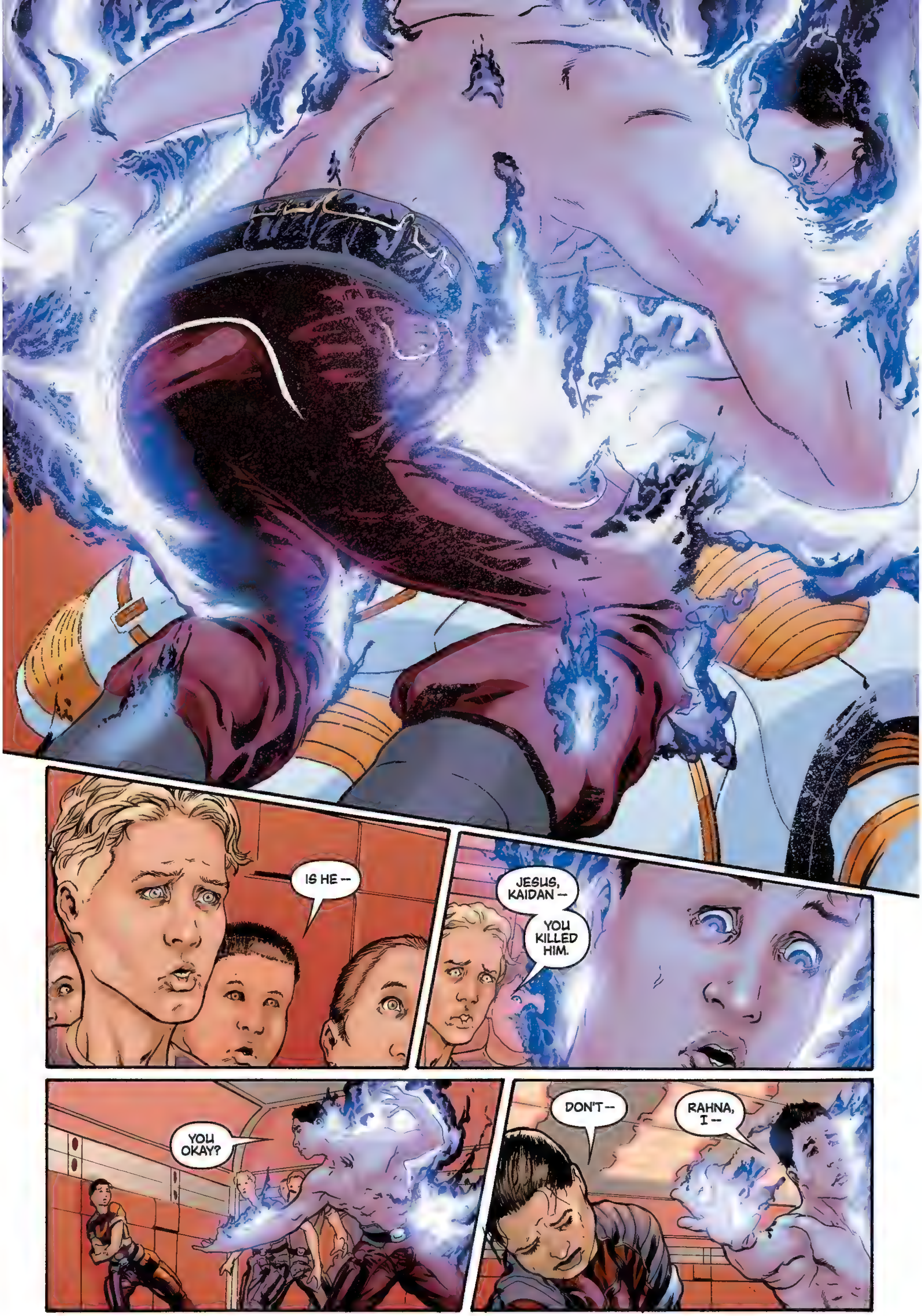

CAN YOU DO IT AGAIN?
WHAT'S THE MATTER, CADET? TOO TIRED? TOO WEAK?
THIRSTY.
OH, I'M SORRY...
TRY THIS INSTEAD.
C'MON. IT'S SO CLOSE.
I -- CAN'T.
THAT'S TOO BAD, BUT THAT WAS A REALLY GOOD EFFORT.
HERE--

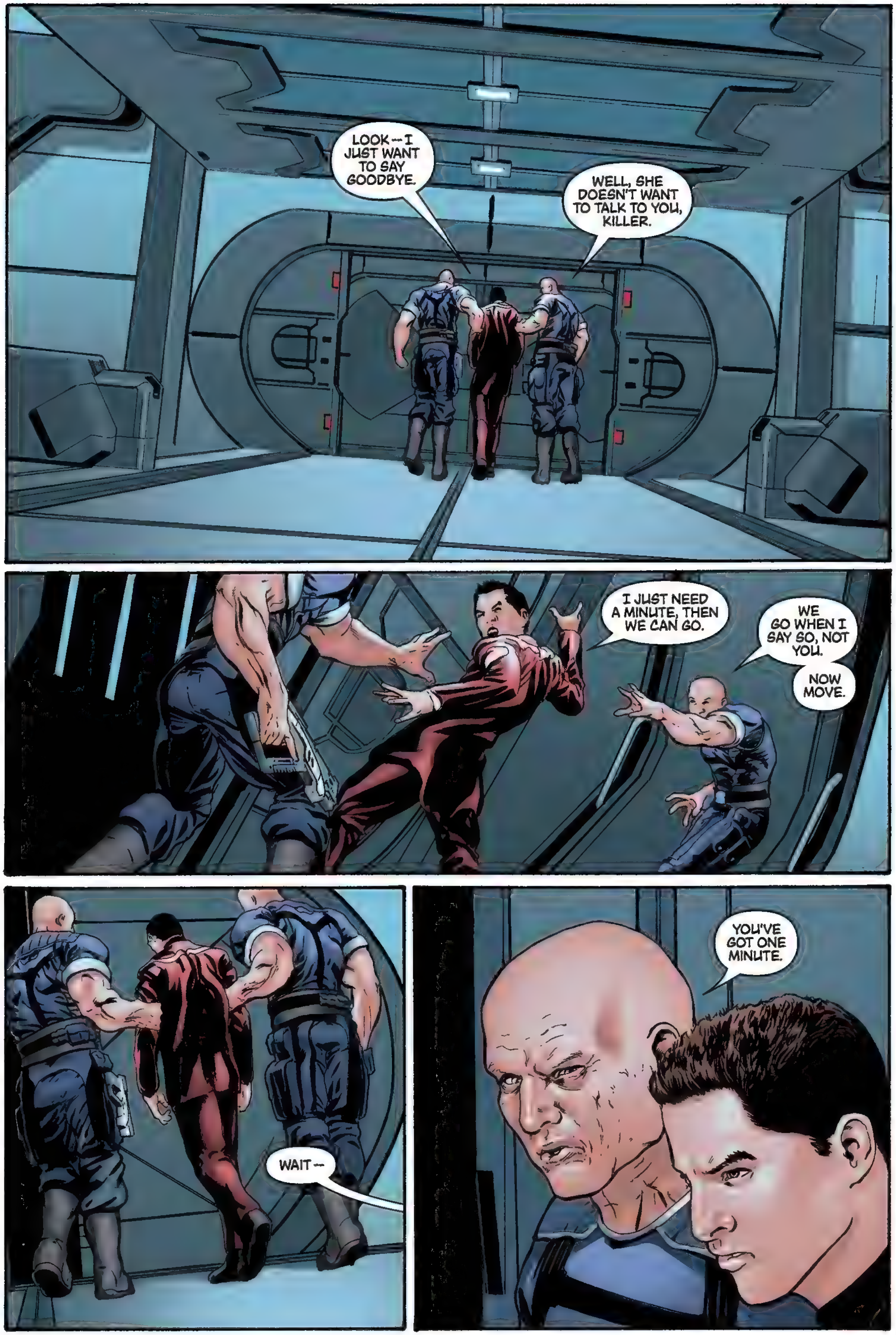

DON'T –
CRACK
AHHH!
PATHETIC!

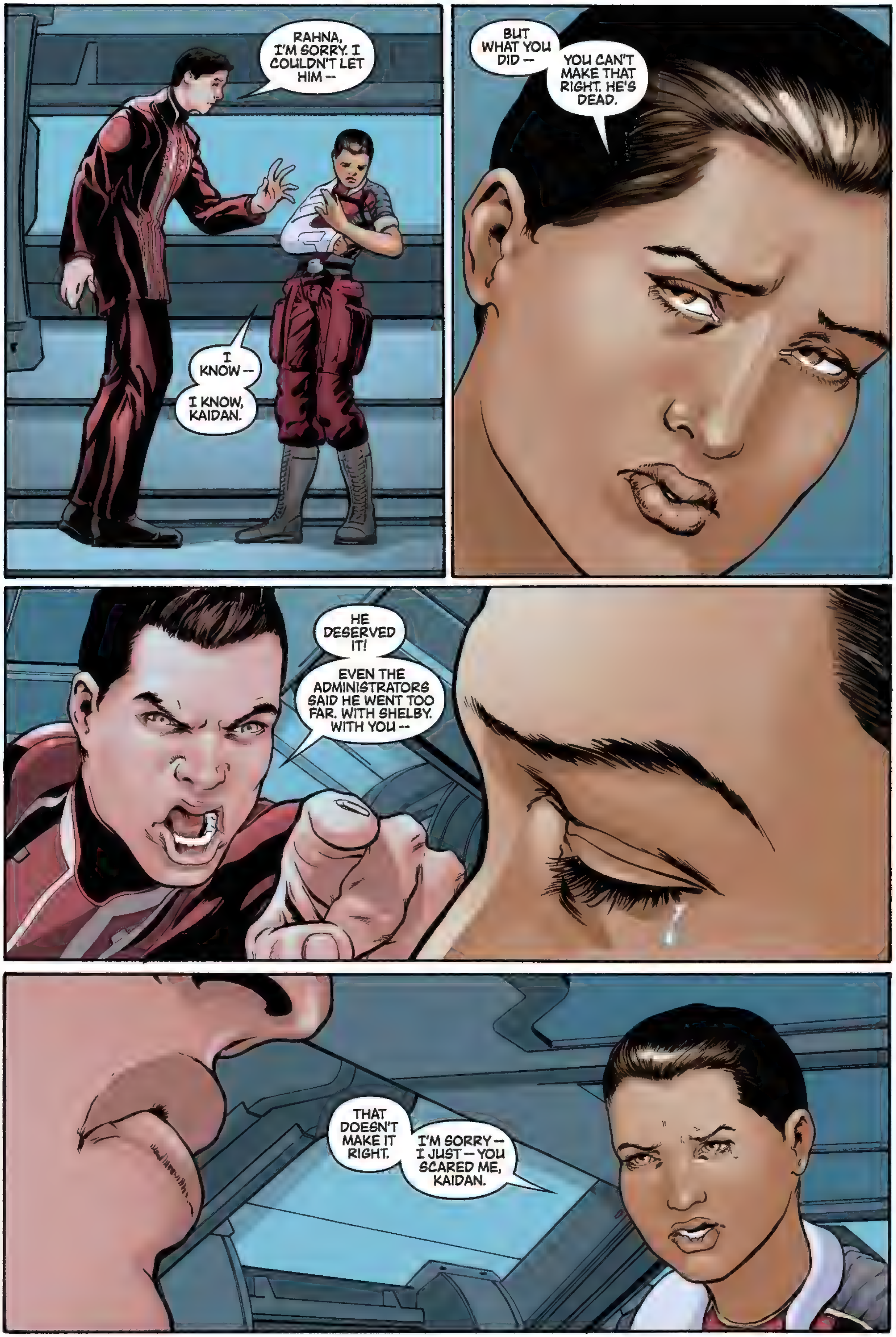

AHHHHH!

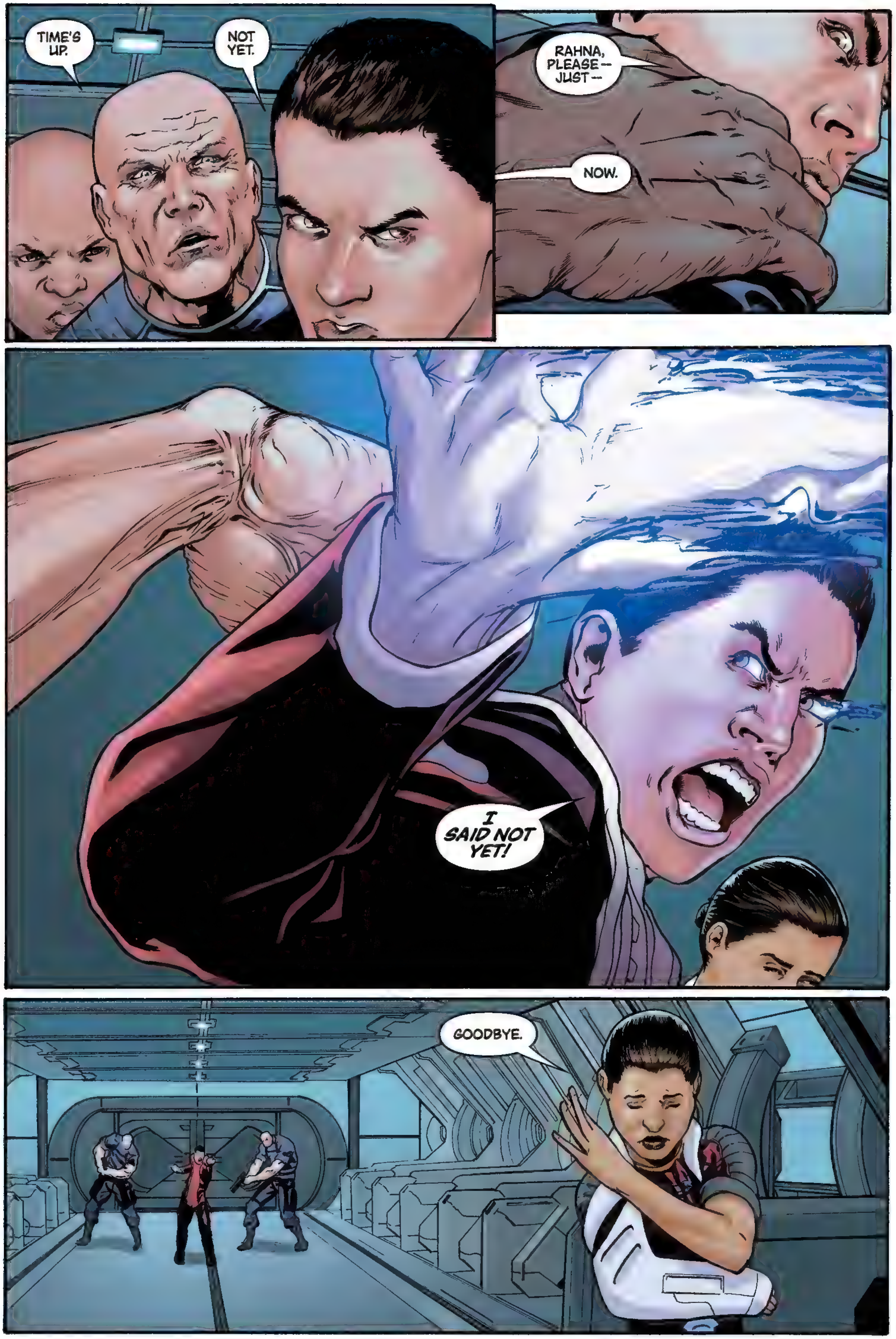

YOU'VE GOT SOME SKILL, BOY.
BUT I'LL TEACH YOU WHAT IT MEANS TO STRIKE SOMEONE!
AHHH!

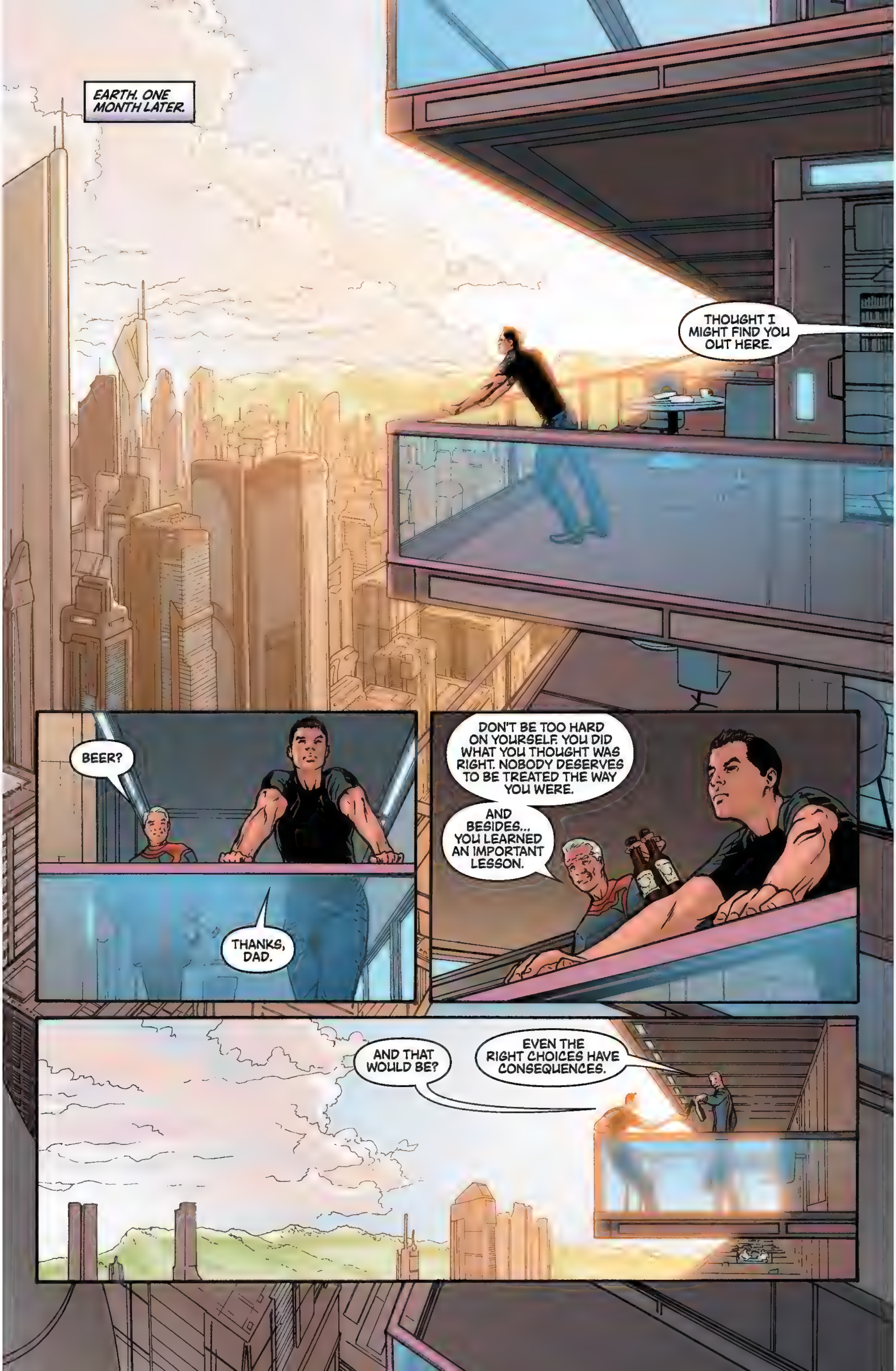

FINISH WHAT YOU STARTED, BOY!
NO --
CRACK

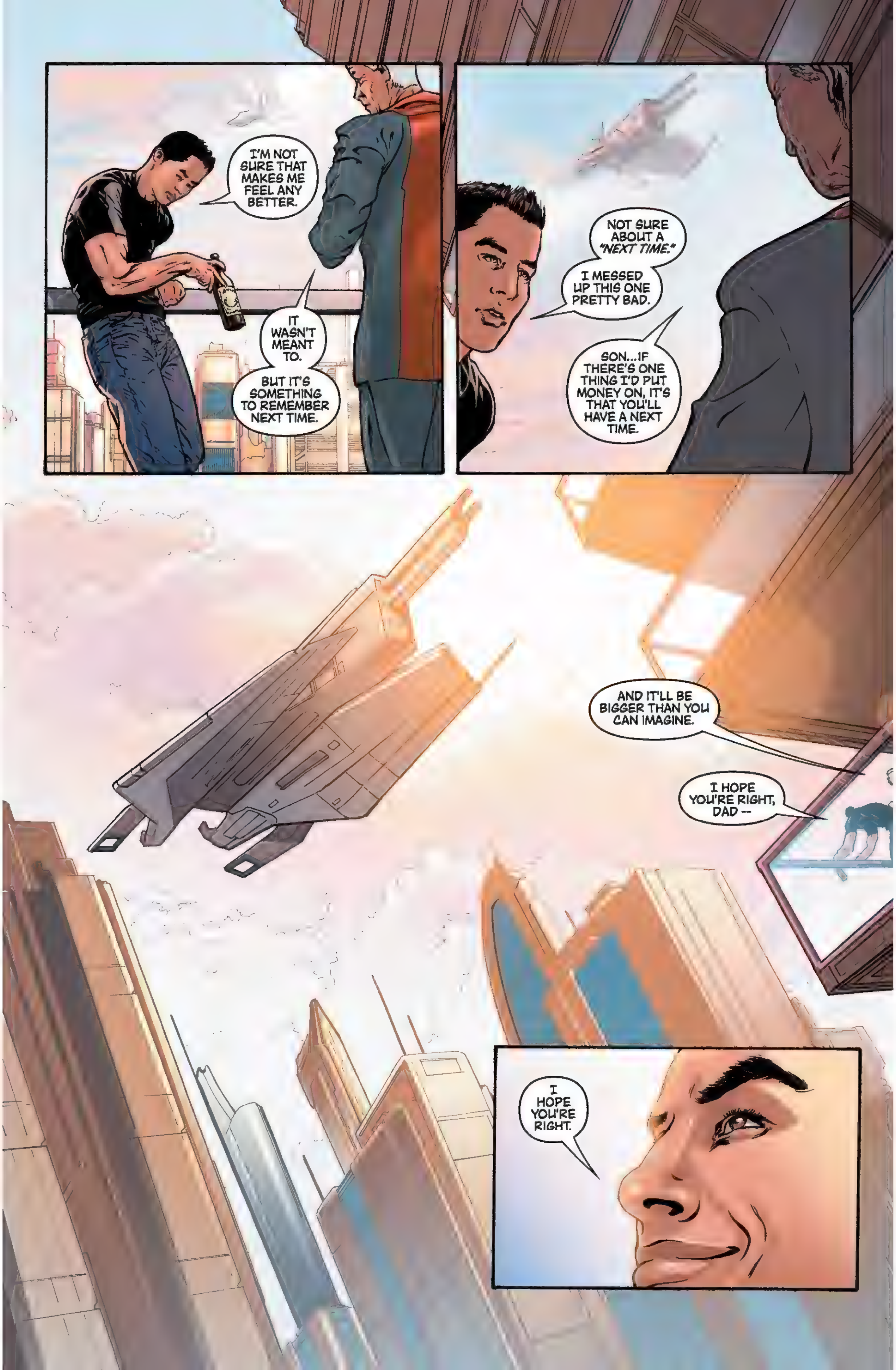

IS HE --
JESUS, KAIDAN --
YOU KILLED HIM.
YOU OKAY?
DON'T --
RAHNA, I --

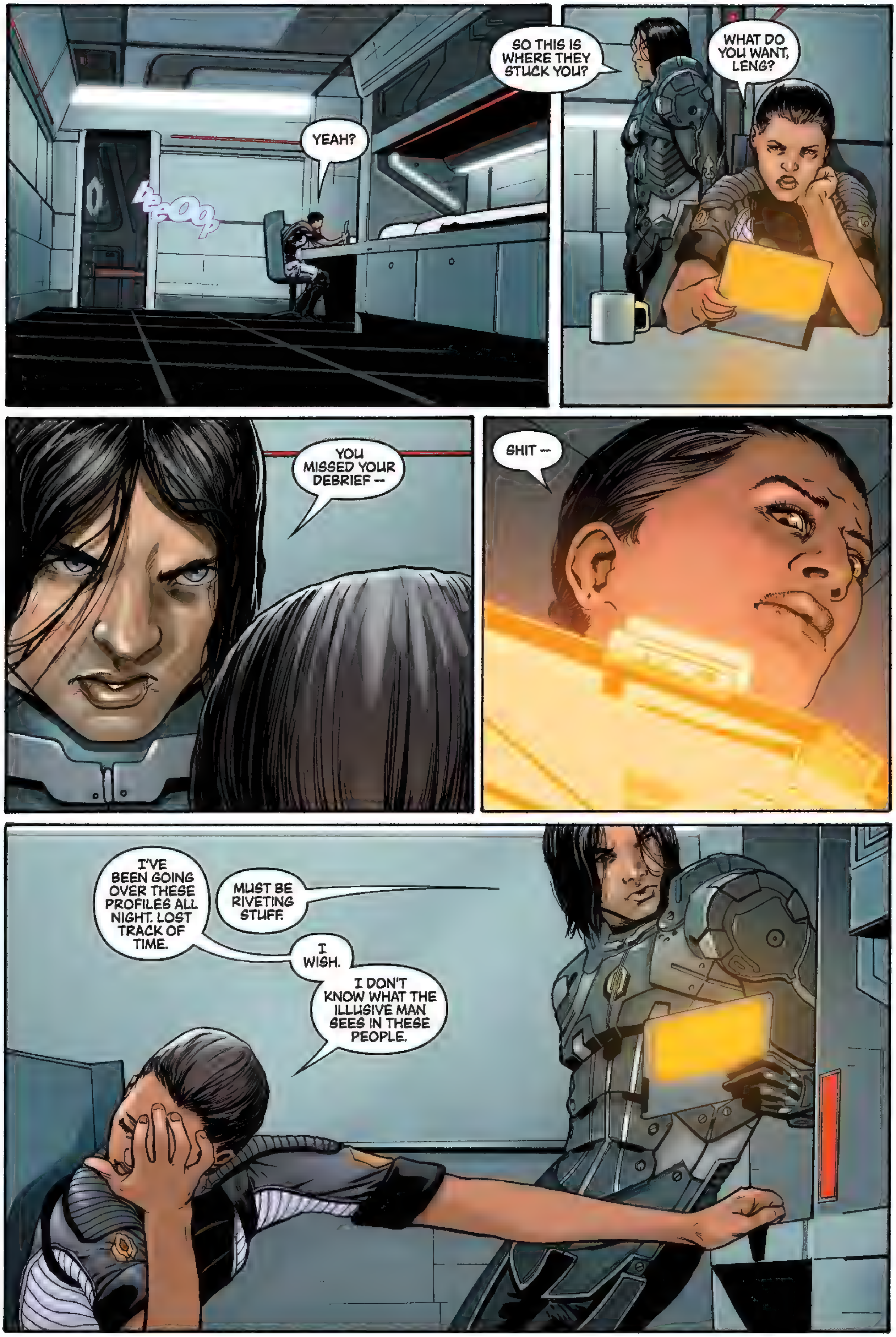

LOOK-- I JUST WANT TO SAY GOODBYE.
WELL, SHE DOESN'T WANT TO TALK TO YOU, KILLER.
I JUST NEED A MINUTE, THEN WE CAN GO.
WE GO WHEN I SAY SO, NOT YOU.
NOW MOVE.
WAIT--
YOU'VE GOT ONE MINUTE.


RAHNA, I'M SORRY. I COULDN'T LET HIM --
I KNOW --
I KNOW, KAIDAN.
BUT WHAT YOU DID --
YOU CAN'T MAKE THAT RIGHT. HE'S DEAD.
HE DESERVED IT!
EVEN THE ADMINISTRATORS SAID HE WENT TOO FAR. WITH SHELBY. WITH YOU --
THAT DOESN'T MAKE IT RIGHT.
I'M SORRY -- I JUST -- YOU SCARED ME, KAIDAN.

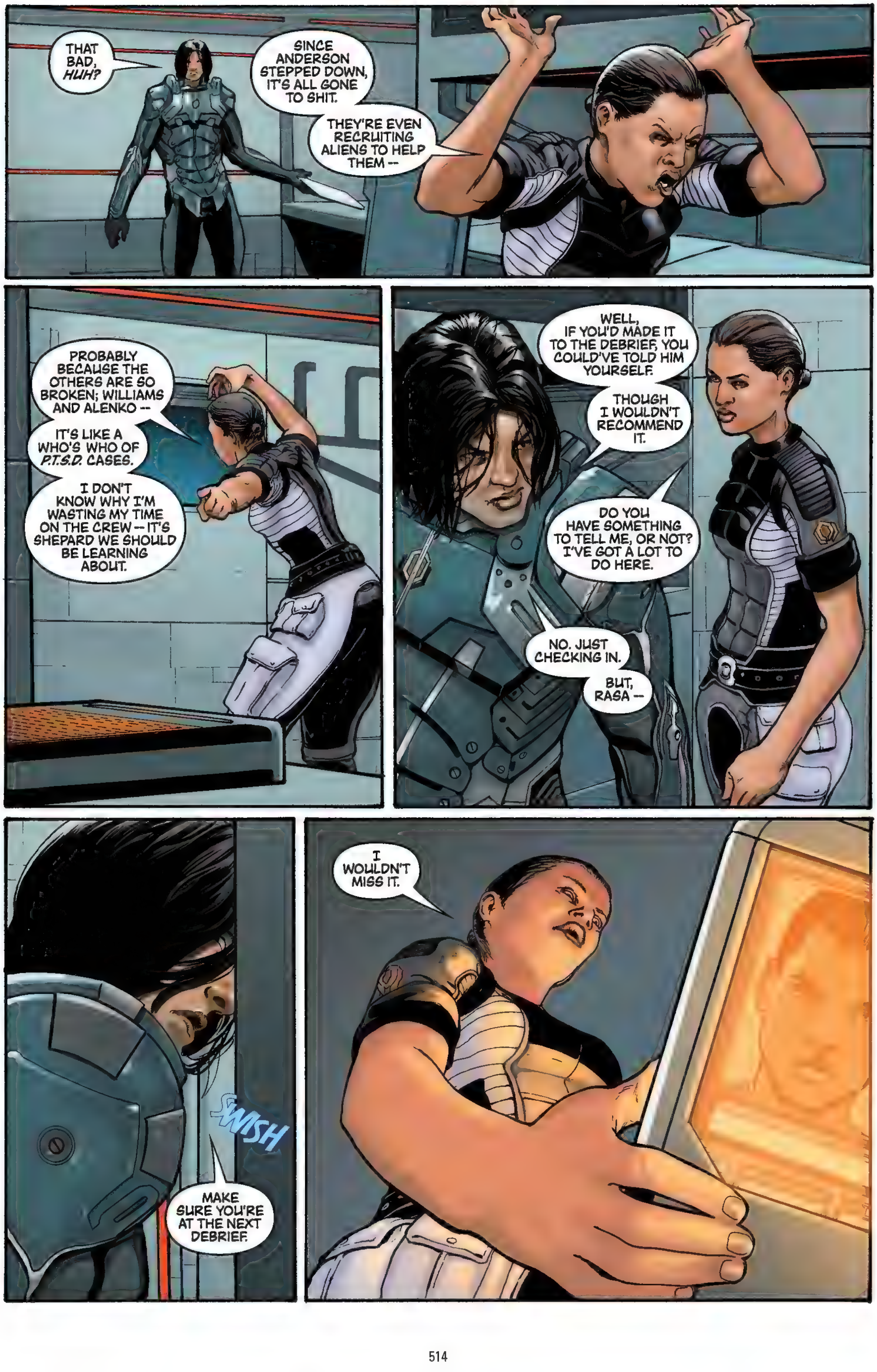

TIME'S UP.
NOT YET.
RAHNA, PLEASE -- JUST --
NOW.
I SAID NOT YET!
GOODBYE.

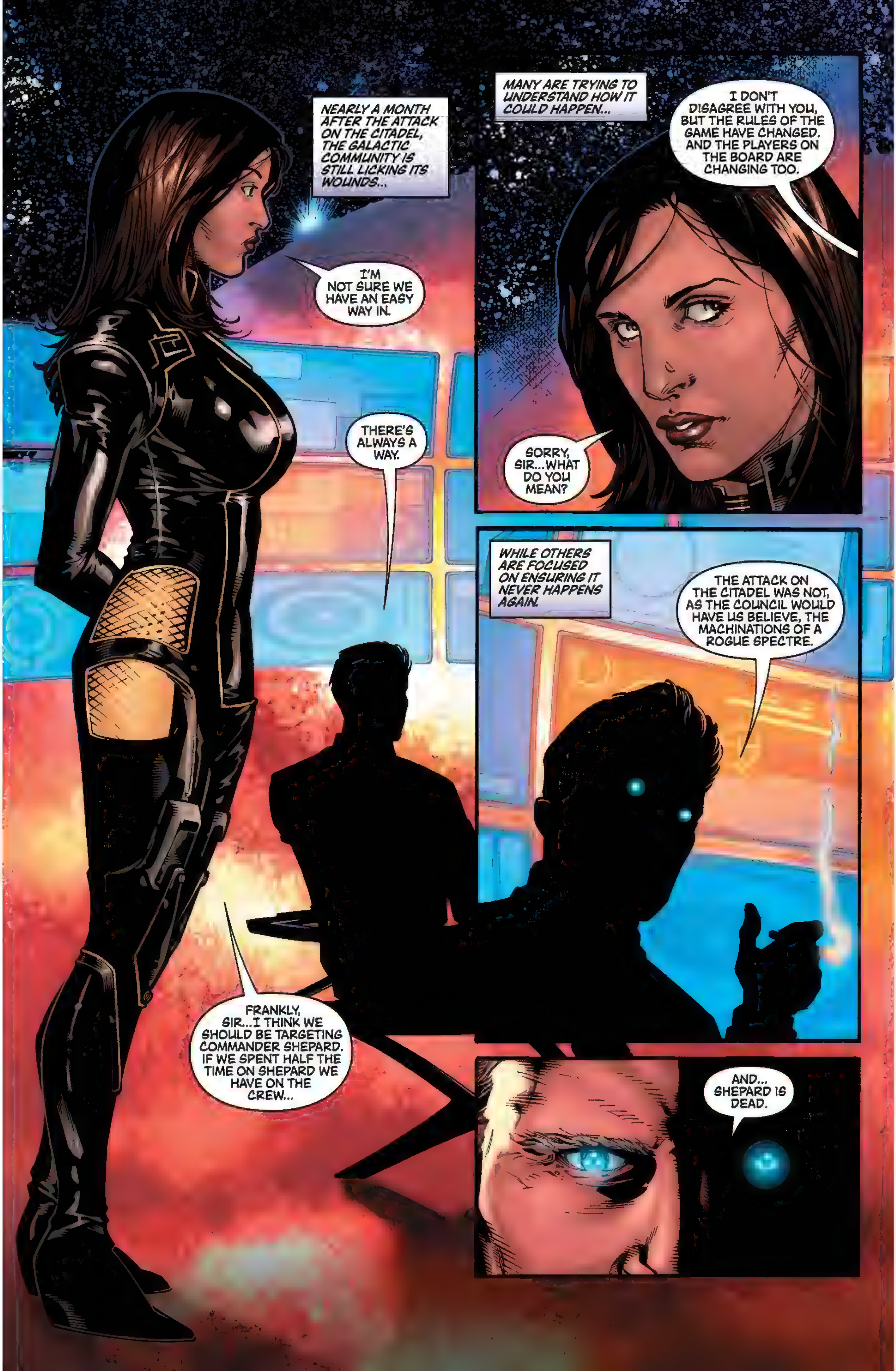

EARTH. ONE MONTH LATER.
THOUGHT I MIGHT FIND YOU OUT HERE.
BEER?
THANKS, DAD.
DON'T BE TOO HARD ON YOURSELF. YOU DID WHAT YOU THOUGHT WAS RIGHT. NOBODY DESERVES TO BE TREATED THE WAY YOU WERE.
AND BESIDES... YOU LEARNED AN IMPORTANT LESSON.
AND THAT WOULD BE?
EVEN THE RIGHT CHOICES HAVE CONSEQUENCES.

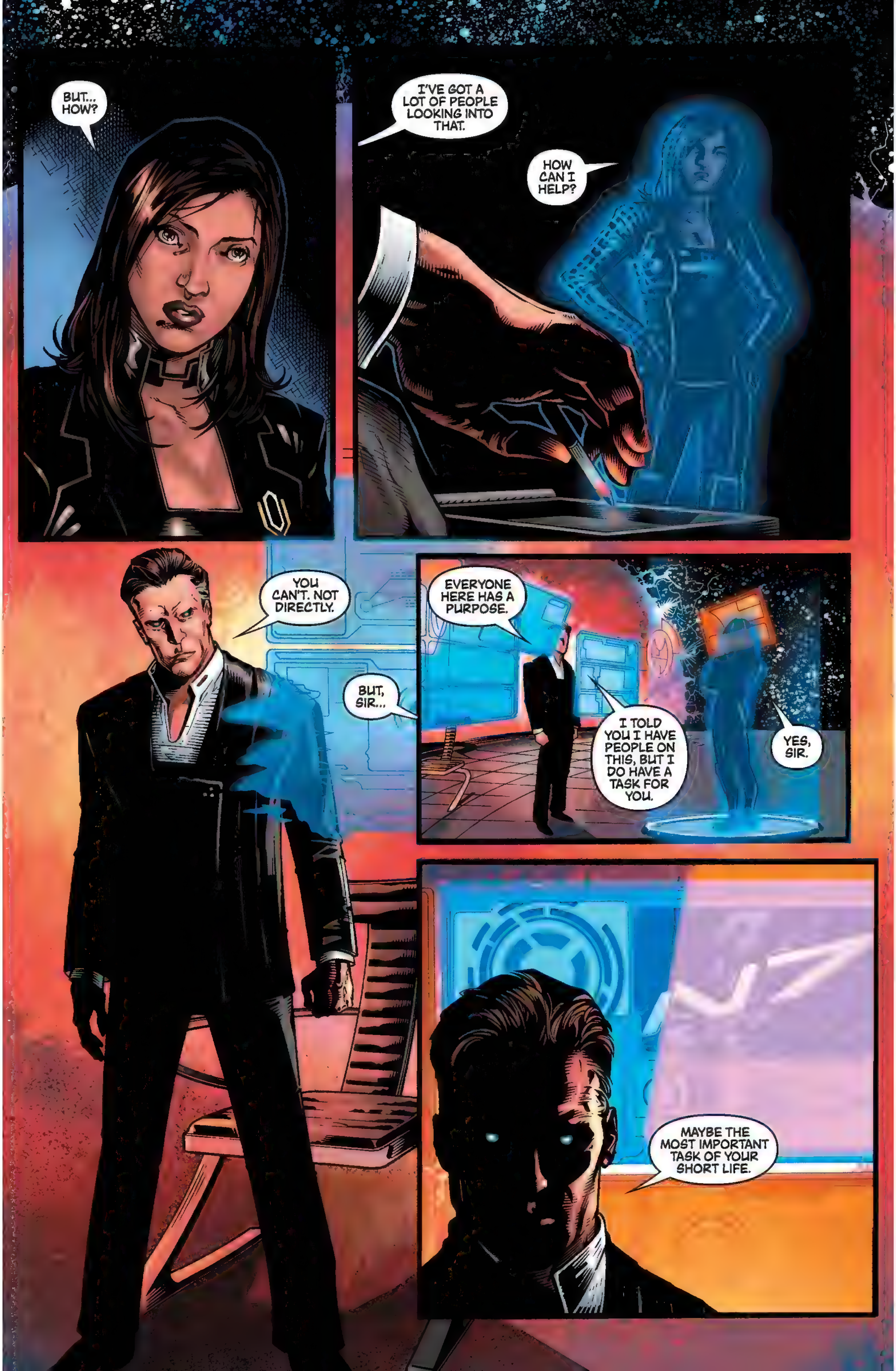

I'M NOT SURE THAT MAKES ME FEEL ANY BETTER.
IT WASN'T MEANT TO.
BUT IT'S SOMETHING TO REMEMBER NEXT TIME.
NOT SURE ABOUT A *"NEXT TIME."*
I MESSED UP THIS ONE PRETTY BAD.
SON...IF THERE'S ONE THING I'D PUT MONEY ON, IT'S THAT YOU'LL HAVE A NEXT TIME.
AND IT'LL BE BIGGER THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE.
I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT, DAD --
I HOPE YOU'RE RIGHT.

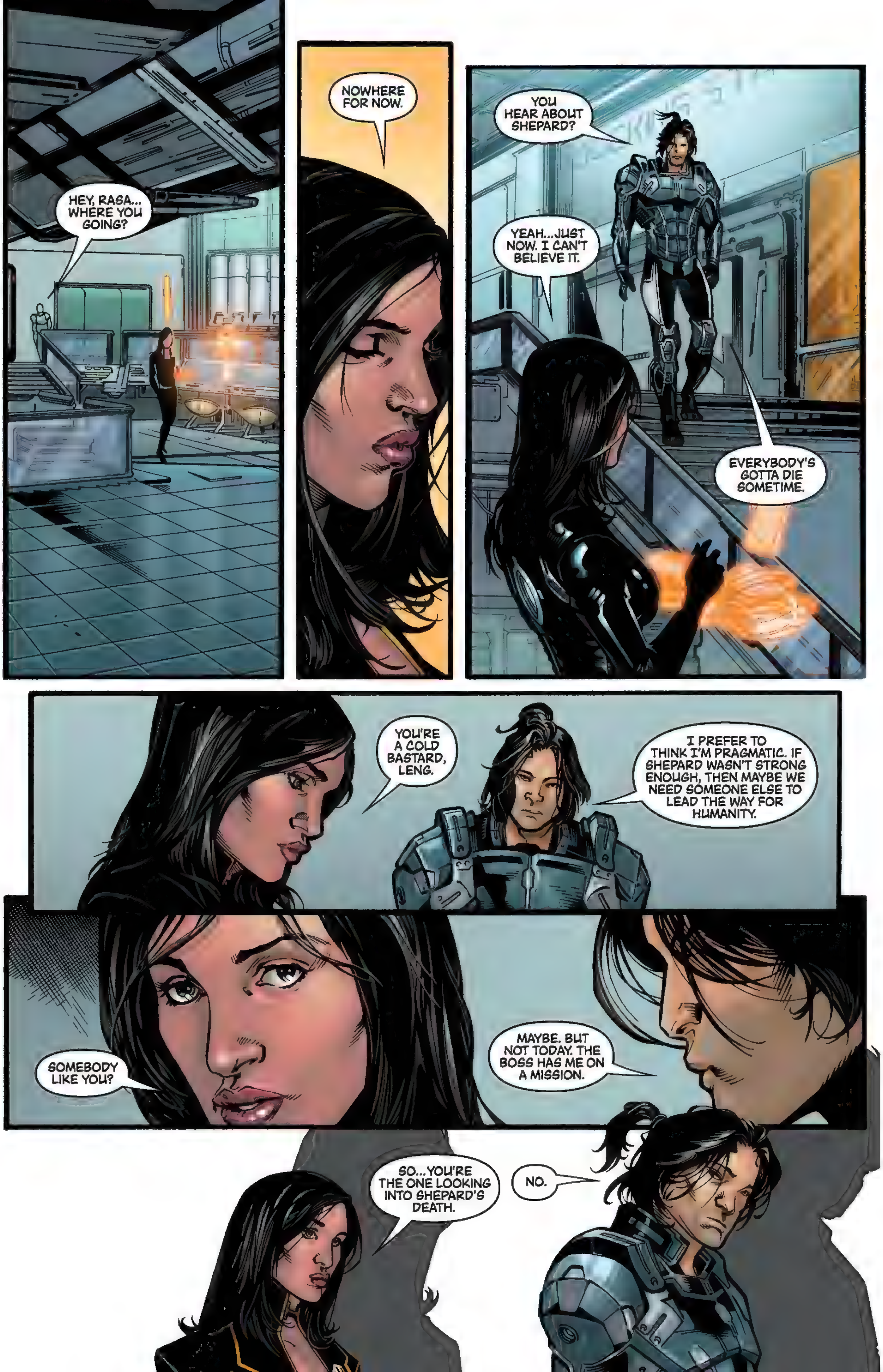


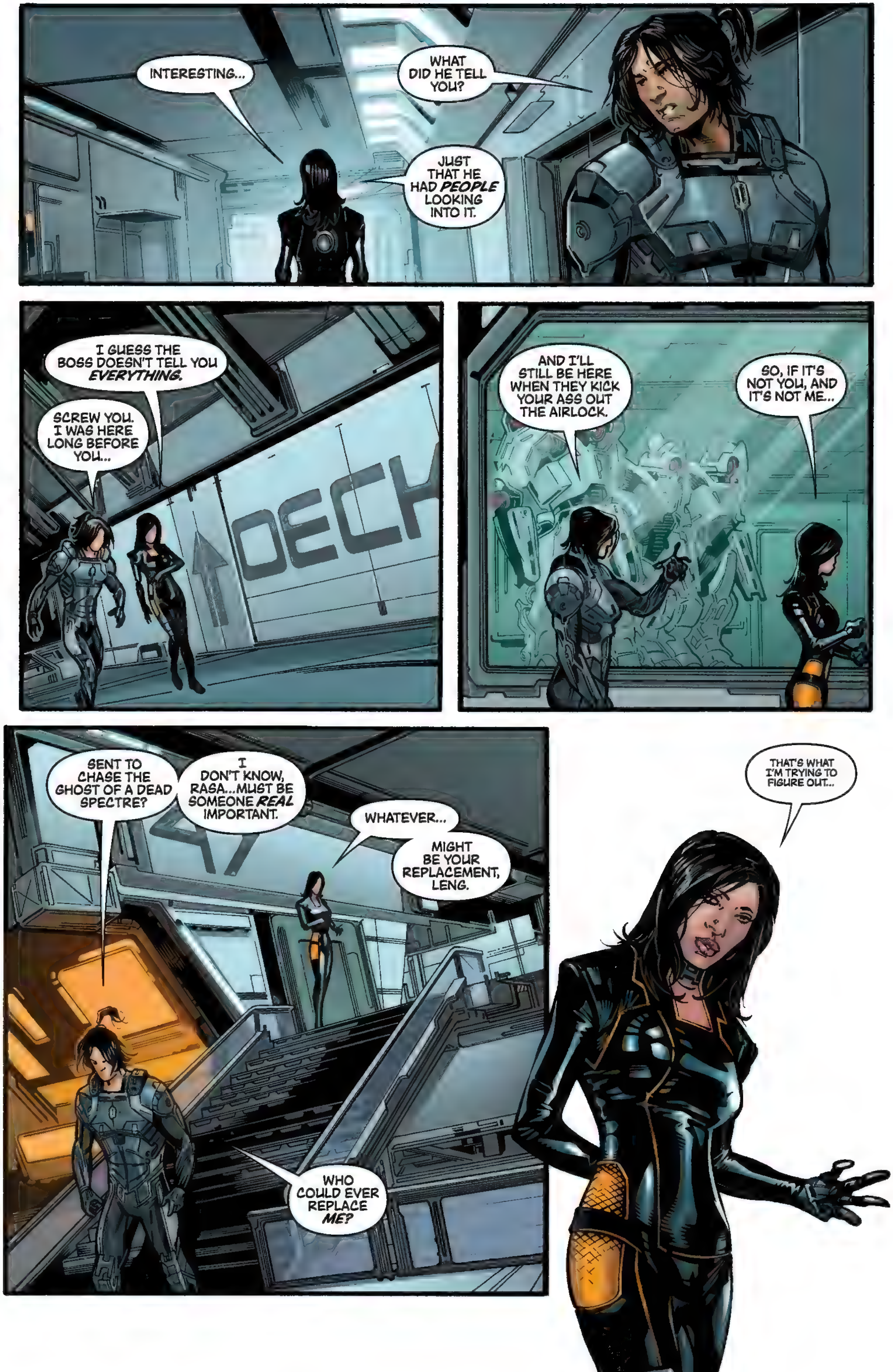
beeOop
YEAH?
SO THIS IS WHERE THEY STUCK YOU?
WHAT DO YOU WANT, LENG?
YOU MISSED YOUR DEBRIEF --
SHIT --
I'VE BEEN GOING OVER THESE PROFILES ALL NIGHT. LOST TRACK OF TIME.
MUST BE RIVETING STUFF.
I WISH.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE ILLUSIVE MAN SEES IN THESE PEOPLE.

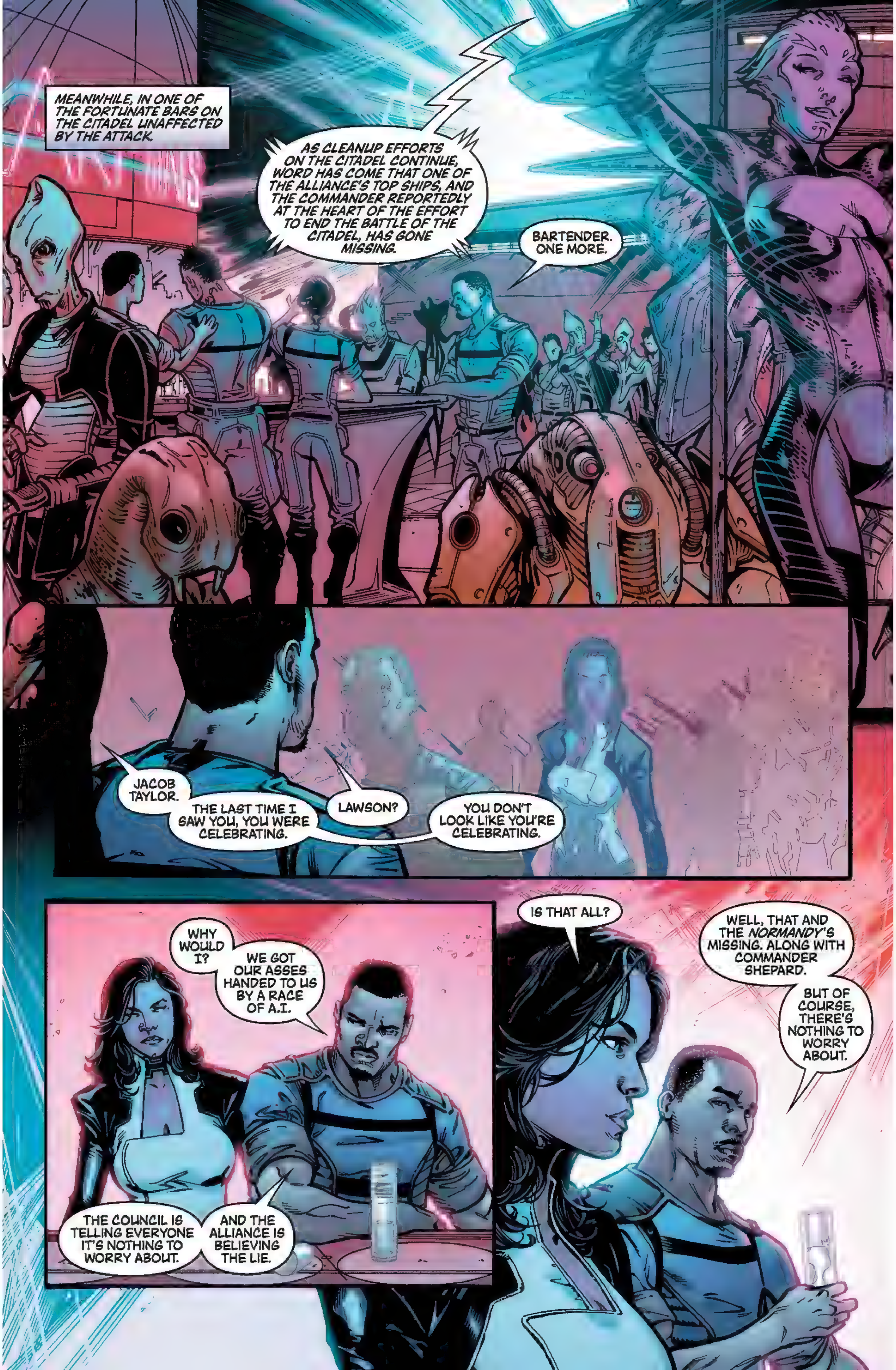

THAT BAD, *HUH?*
SINCE ANDERSON STEPPED DOWN, IT'S ALL GONE TO SHIT.
THEY'RE EVEN RECRUITING ALIENS TO HELP THEM --
PROBABLY BECAUSE THE OTHERS ARE SO BROKEN; WILLIAMS AND ALENKO --
IT'S LIKE A WHO'S WHO OF *P.T.S.D.* CASES.
I DON'T KNOW WHY I'M WASTING MY TIME ON THE CREW -- IT'S SHEPARD WE SHOULD BE LEARNING ABOUT.
WELL, IF YOU'D MADE IT TO THE DEBRIEF, YOU COULD'VE TOLD HIM YOURSELF.
THOUGH I WOULDN'T RECOMMEND IT.
DO YOU HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL ME, OR NOT? I'VE GOT A LOT TO DO HERE.
NO. JUST CHECKING IN.
BUT, RASA --
SWISH
MAKE SURE YOU'RE AT THE NEXT DEBRIEF.
I WOULDN'T MISS IT.

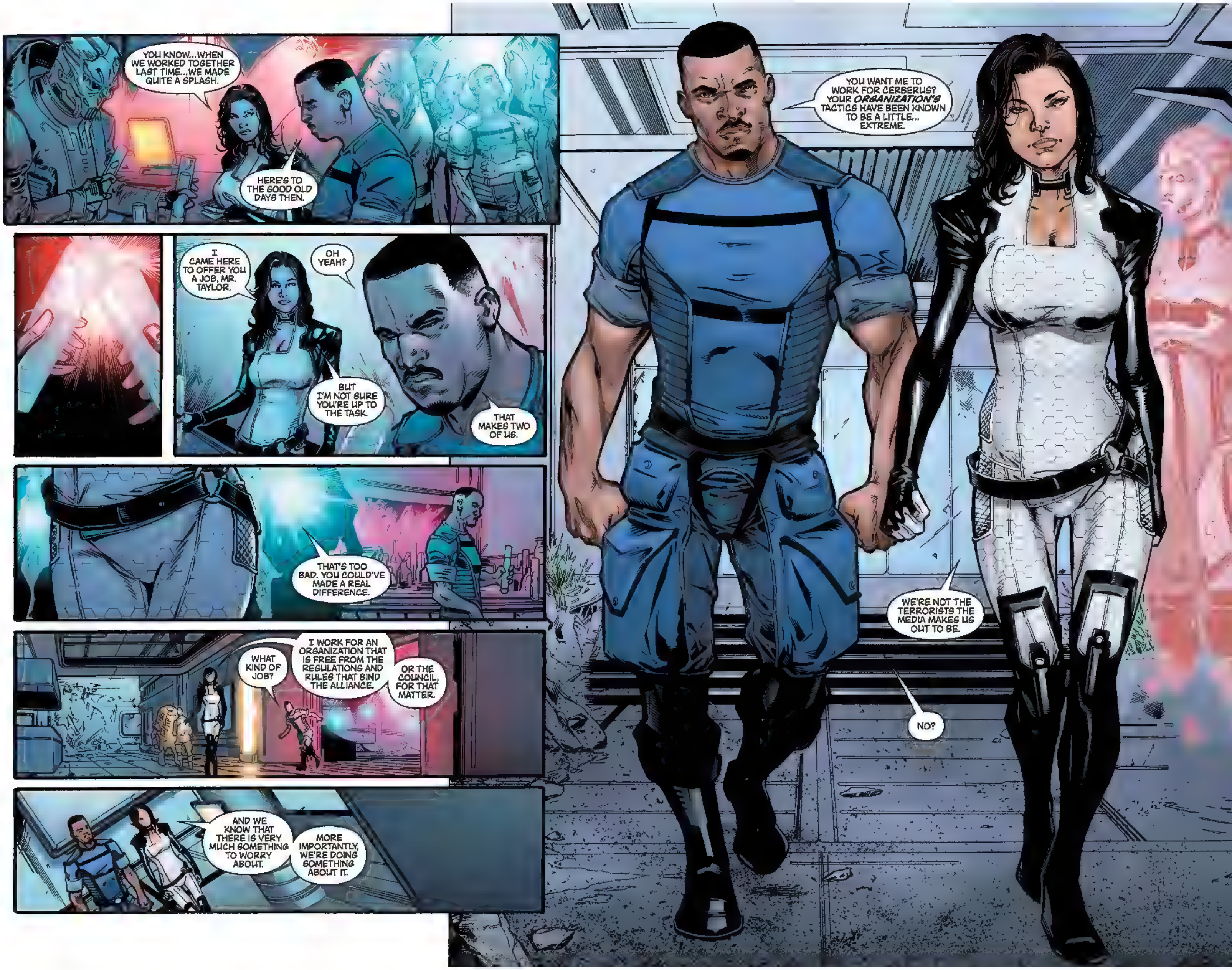

NEARLY A MONTH AFTER THE ATTACK ON THE CITADEL, THE GALACTIC COMMUNITY IS STILL LICKING ITS WOUNDS...
I'M NOT SURE WE HAVE AN EASY WAY IN.
THERE'S ALWAYS A WAY.
FRANKLY, SIR...I THINK WE SHOULD BE TARGETING COMMANDER SHEPARD. IF WE SPENT HALF THE TIME ON SHEPARD WE HAVE ON THE CREW...
MANY ARE TRYING TO UNDERSTAND HOW IT COULD HAPPEN...
I DON'T DISAGREE WITH YOU, BUT THE RULES OF THE GAME HAVE CHANGED. AND THE PLAYERS ON THE BOARD ARE CHANGING TOO.
SORRY, SIR...WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
WHILE OTHERS ARE FOCUSED ON ENSURING IT NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN.
THE ATTACK ON THE CITADEL WAS NOT, AS THE COUNCIL WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE, THE MACHINATIONS OF A ROGUE SPECTRE.
AND... SHEPARD IS DEAD.

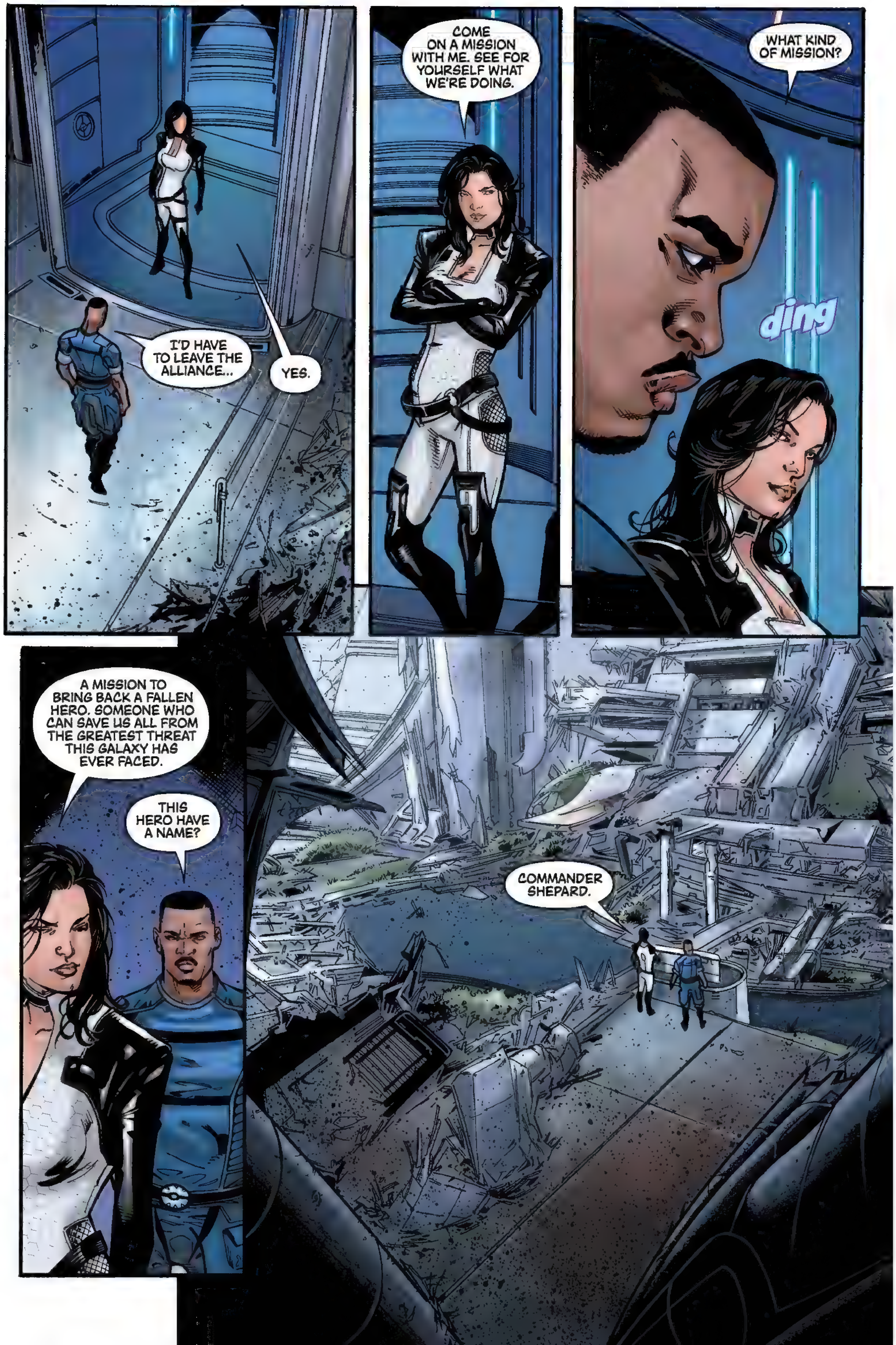

BUT... HOW?
I'VE GOT A LOT OF PEOPLE LOOKING INTO THAT.
HOW CAN I HELP?
YOU CAN'T. NOT DIRECTLY.
BUT, SIR...
EVERYONE HERE HAS A PURPOSE.
I TOLD YOU I HAVE PEOPLE ON THIS, BUT I DO HAVE A TASK FOR YOU.
YES, SIR.
MAYBE THE MOST IMPORTANT TASK OF YOUR SHORT LIFE.

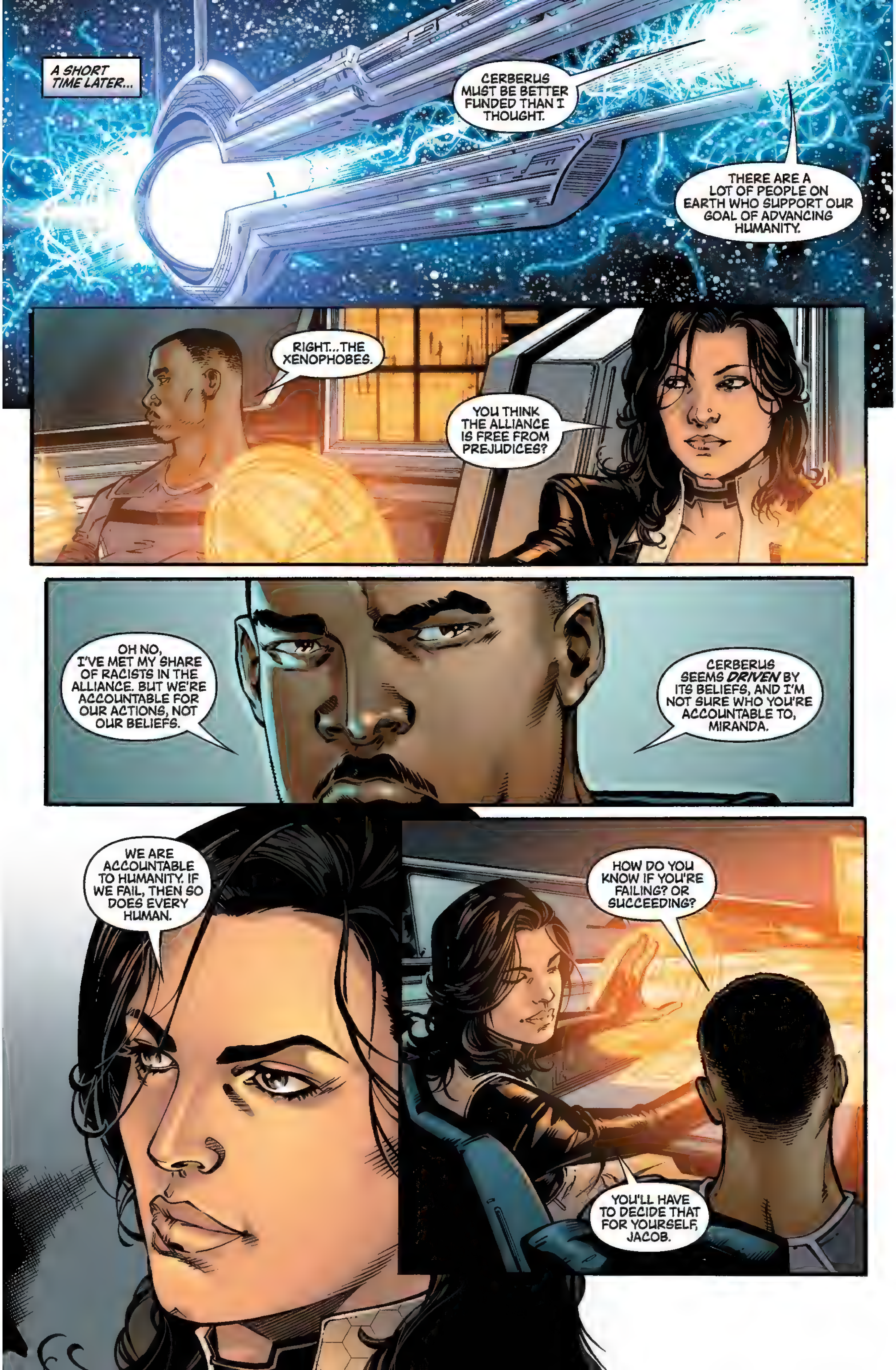

HEY, RASA... WHERE YOU GOING?
NOWHERE FOR NOW.
YOU HEAR ABOUT SHEPARD?
YEAH...JUST NOW. I CAN'T BELIEVE IT.
EVERYBODY'S GOTTA DIE SOMETIME.
YOU'RE A COLD BASTARD, LENG.
I PREFER TO THINK I'M PRAGMATIC. IF SHEPARD WASN'T STRONG ENOUGH, THEN MAYBE WE NEED SOMEONE ELSE TO LEAD THE WAY FOR HUMANITY.
SOMEBODY LIKE YOU?
MAYBE. BUT NOT TODAY. THE BOSS HAS ME ON A MISSION.
SO...YOU'RE THE ONE LOOKING INTO SHEPARD'S DEATH.
NO.

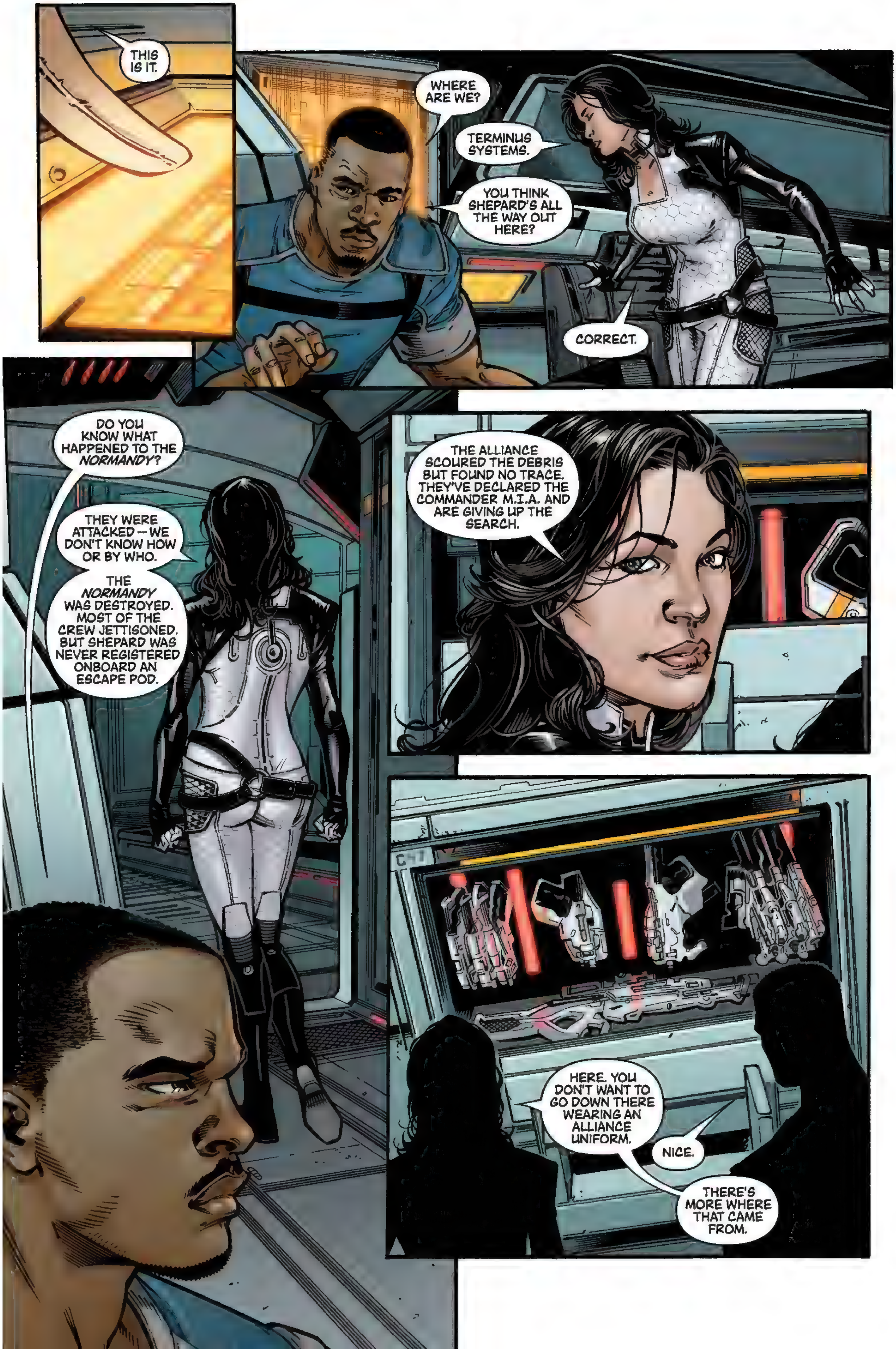

INTERESTING...
WHAT DID HE TELL YOU?
JUST THAT HE HAD *PEOPLE* LOOKING INTO IT.
I GUESS THE BOSS DOESN'T TELL YOU *EVERYTHING.*
SCREW YOU. I WAS HERE LONG BEFORE YOU...
DECK
AND I'LL STILL BE HERE WHEN THEY KICK YOUR ASS OUT THE AIRLOCK.
SO, IF IT'S NOT YOU, AND IT'S NOT ME...
SENT TO CHASE THE GHOST OF A DEAD SPECTRE?
I DON'T KNOW, RASA...MUST BE SOMEONE *REAL* IMPORTANT.
WHATEVER...
MIGHT BE YOUR REPLACEMENT, LENG.
WHO COULD EVER REPLACE *ME?*
THAT'S WHAT I'M TRYING TO FIGURE OUT...

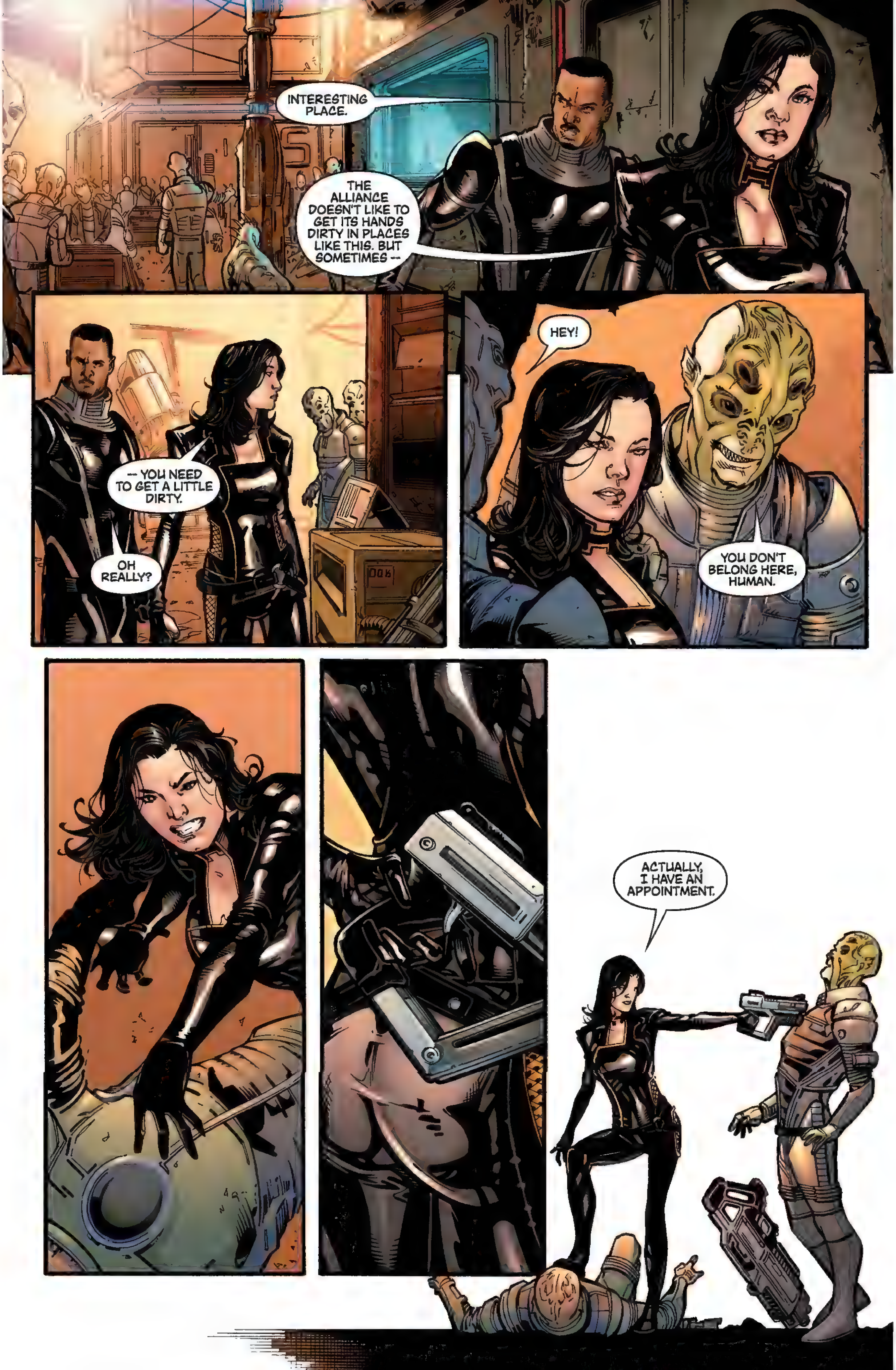

MEANWHILE, IN ONE OF THE FORTUNATE BARS ON THE CITADEL UNAFFECTED BY THE ATTACK.
AS CLEANUP EFFORTS ON THE CITADEL CONTINUE, WORD HAS COME THAT ONE OF THE ALLIANCE'S TOP SHIPS, AND THE COMMANDER REPORTEDLY AT THE HEART OF THE EFFORT TO END THE BATTLE OF THE CITADEL, HAS GONE MISSING.
BARTENDER. ONE MORE.
LAWSON?
JACOB TAYLOR.
THE LAST TIME I SAW YOU, YOU WERE CELEBRATING.
YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE YOU'RE CELEBRATING.
WHY WOULD I?
WE GOT OUR ASSES HANDED TO US BY A RACE OF A.I.
THE COUNCIL IS TELLING EVERYONE IT'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
AND THE ALLIANCE IS BELIEVING THE LIE.
IS THAT ALL?
WELL, THAT AND THE *NORMANDY'S* MISSING. ALONG WITH COMMANDER SHEPARD.
BUT OF COURSE, THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.

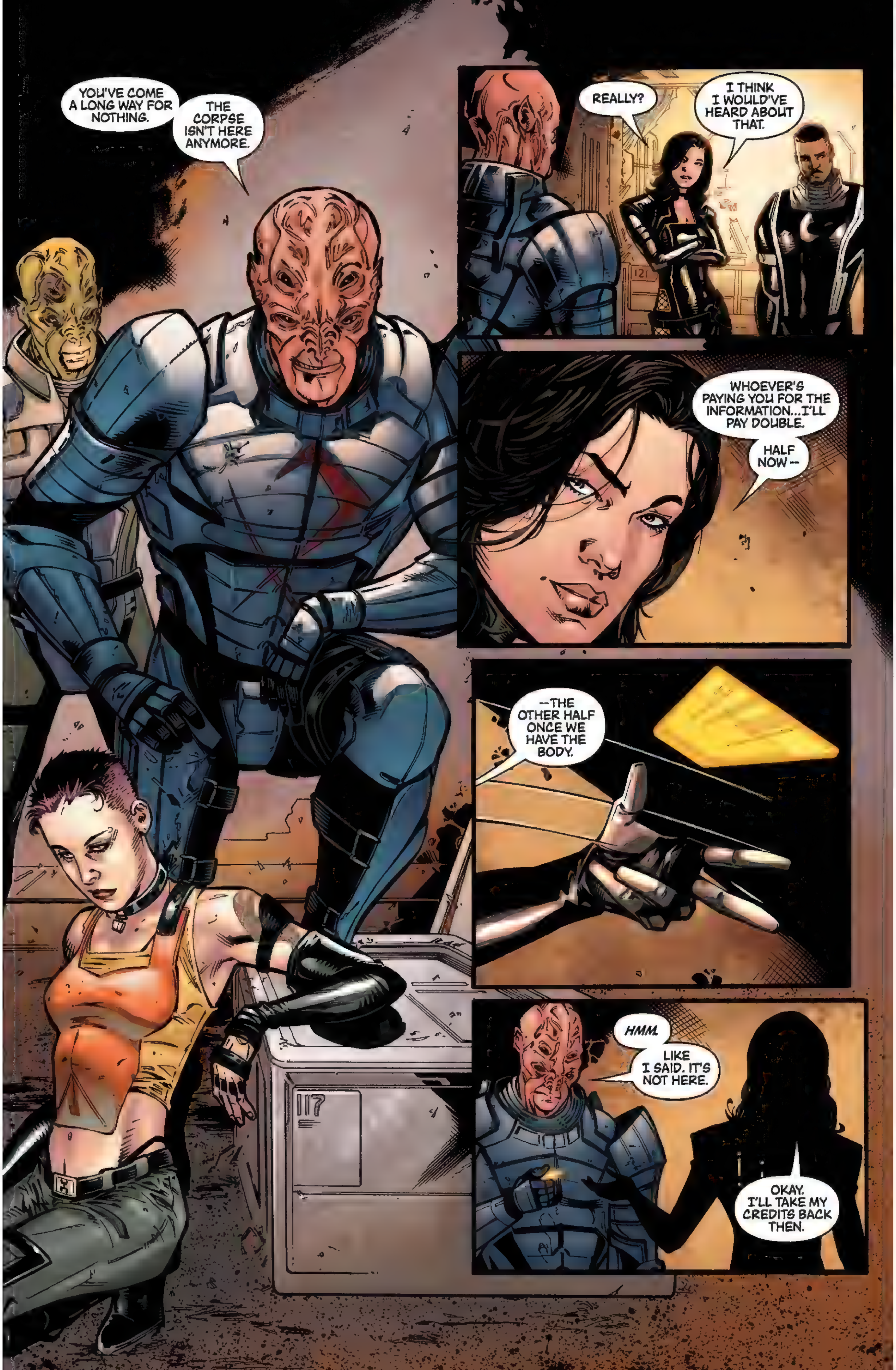

YOU KNOW...WHEN WE WORKED TOGETHER LAST TIME...WE MADE QUITE A SPLASH.
HERE'S TO THE GOOD OLD DAYS THEN.
I CAME HERE TO OFFER YOU A JOB, MR. TAYLOR.
OH YEAH?
BUT I'M NOT SURE YOU'RE UP TO THE TASK.
THAT MAKES TWO OF US.
THAT'S TOO BAD. YOU COULD'VE MADE A REAL DIFFERENCE.
WHAT KIND OF JOB?
I WORK FOR AN ORGANIZATION THAT IS FREE FROM THE REGULATIONS AND RULES THAT BIND THE ALLIANCE.
OR THE COUNCIL, FOR THAT MATTER.
AND WE KNOW THAT THERE IS VERY MUCH SOMETHING TO WORRY ABOUT.
MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE'RE DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT.
YOU WANT ME TO WORK FOR CERBERUS? YOUR *ORGANIZATION'S* TACTICS HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO BE A LITTLE... EXTREME.
WE'RE NOT THE TERRORISTS THE MEDIA MAKES US OUT TO BE.
NO?

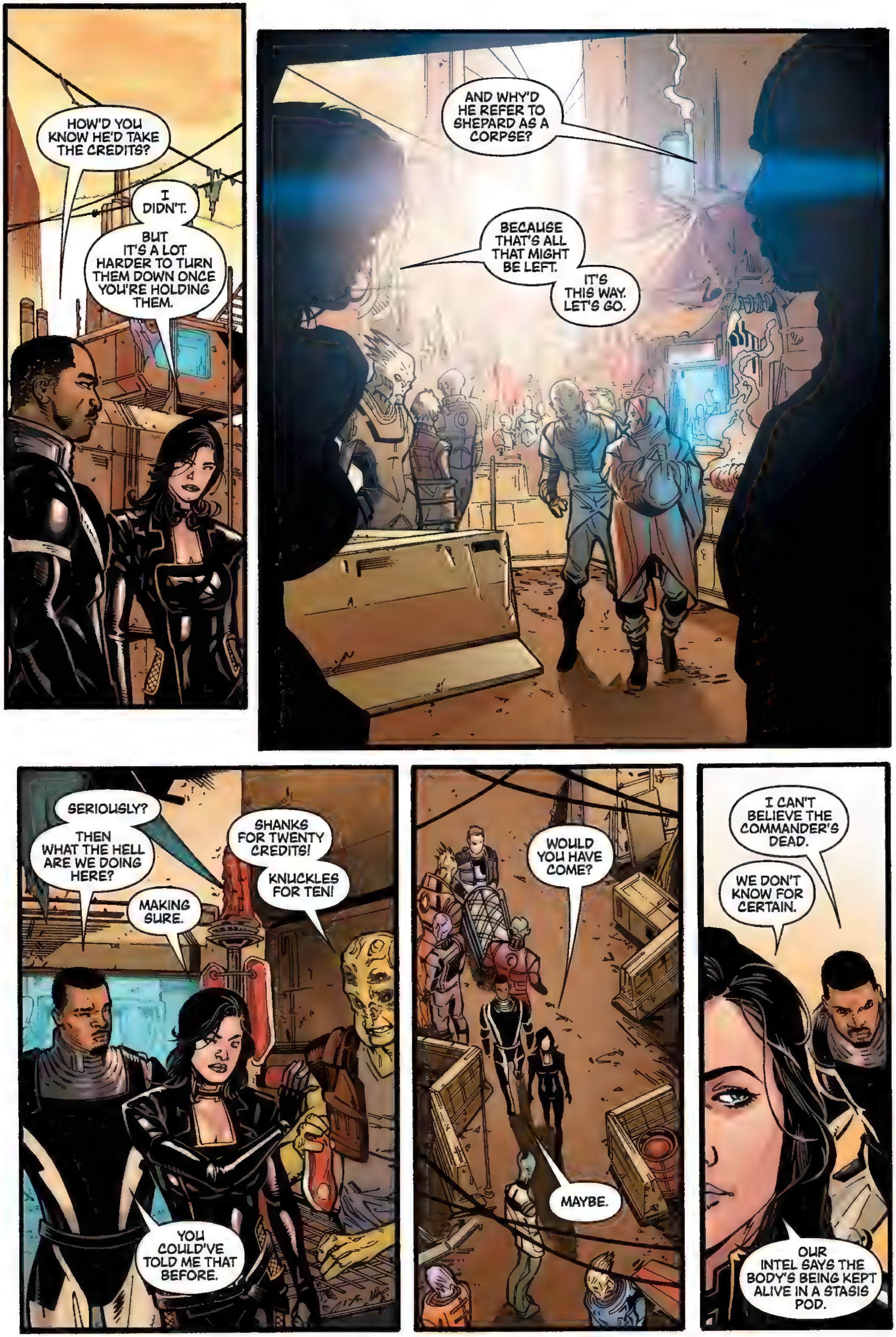

I'D HAVE TO LEAVE THE ALLIANCE...
YES.
COME ON A MISSION WITH ME. SEE FOR YOURSELF WHAT WE'RE DOING.
WHAT KIND OF MISSION?
ding
A MISSION TO BRING BACK A FALLEN HERO. SOMEONE WHO CAN SAVE US ALL FROM THE GREATEST THREAT THIS GALAXY HAS EVER FACED.
THIS HERO HAVE A NAME?
COMMANDER SHEPARD.

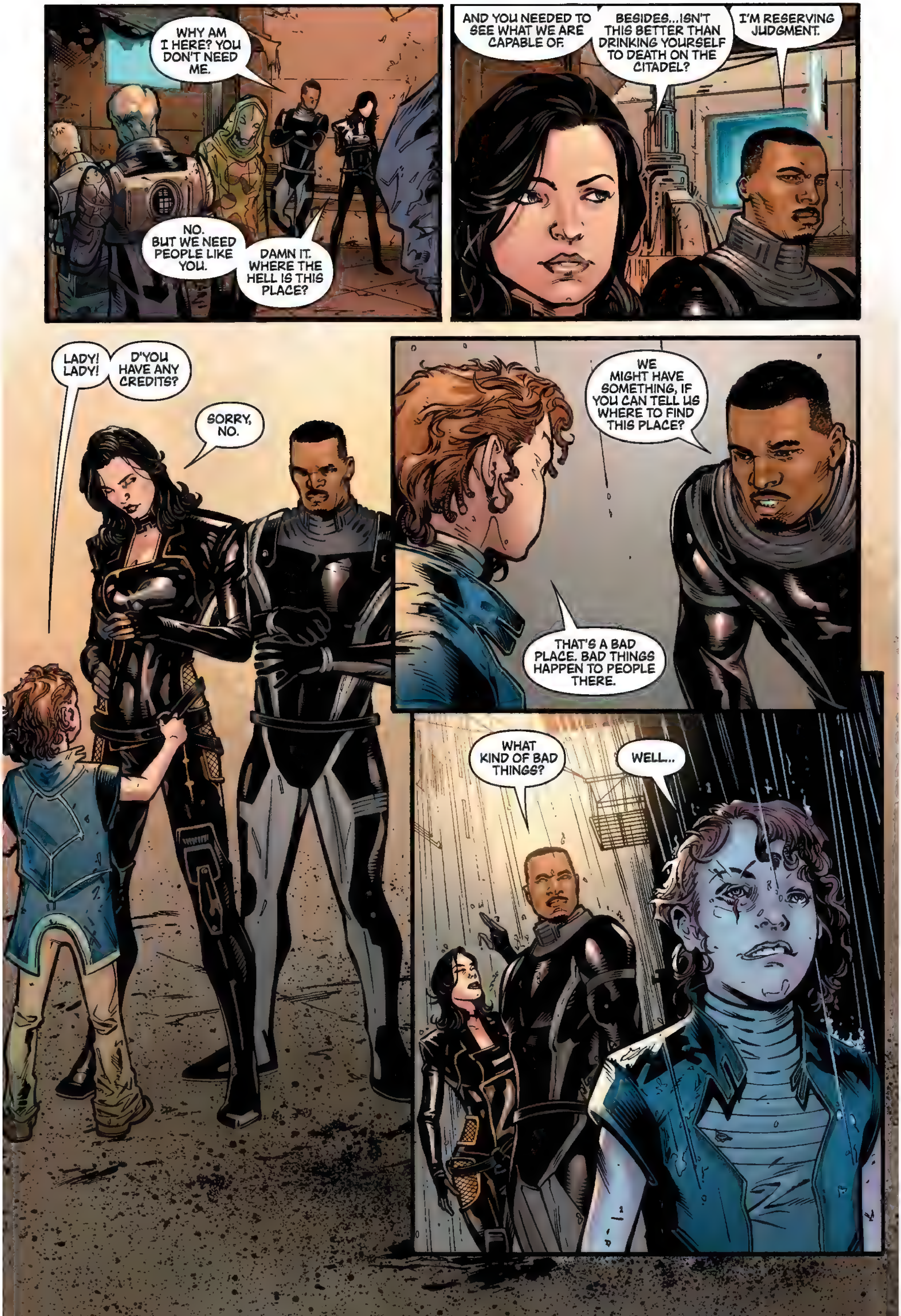

A SHORT TIME LATER...
CERBERUS MUST BE BETTER FUNDED THAN I THOUGHT.
THERE ARE A LOT OF PEOPLE ON EARTH WHO SUPPORT OUR GOAL OF ADVANCING HUMANITY.
RIGHT...THE XENOPHOBES.
YOU THINK THE ALLIANCE IS FREE FROM PREJUDICES?
OH NO, I'VE MET MY SHARE OF RACISTS IN THE ALLIANCE. BUT WE'RE ACCOUNTABLE FOR OUR ACTIONS, NOT OUR BELIEFS.
CERBERUS SEEMS *DRIVEN* BY ITS BELIEFS, AND I'M NOT SURE WHO YOU'RE ACCOUNTABLE TO, MIRANDA.
WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE TO HUMANITY. IF WE FAIL, THEN SO DOES EVERY HUMAN.
HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU'RE FAILING? OR SUCCEEDING?
YOU'LL HAVE TO DECIDE THAT FOR YOURSELF, JACOB.

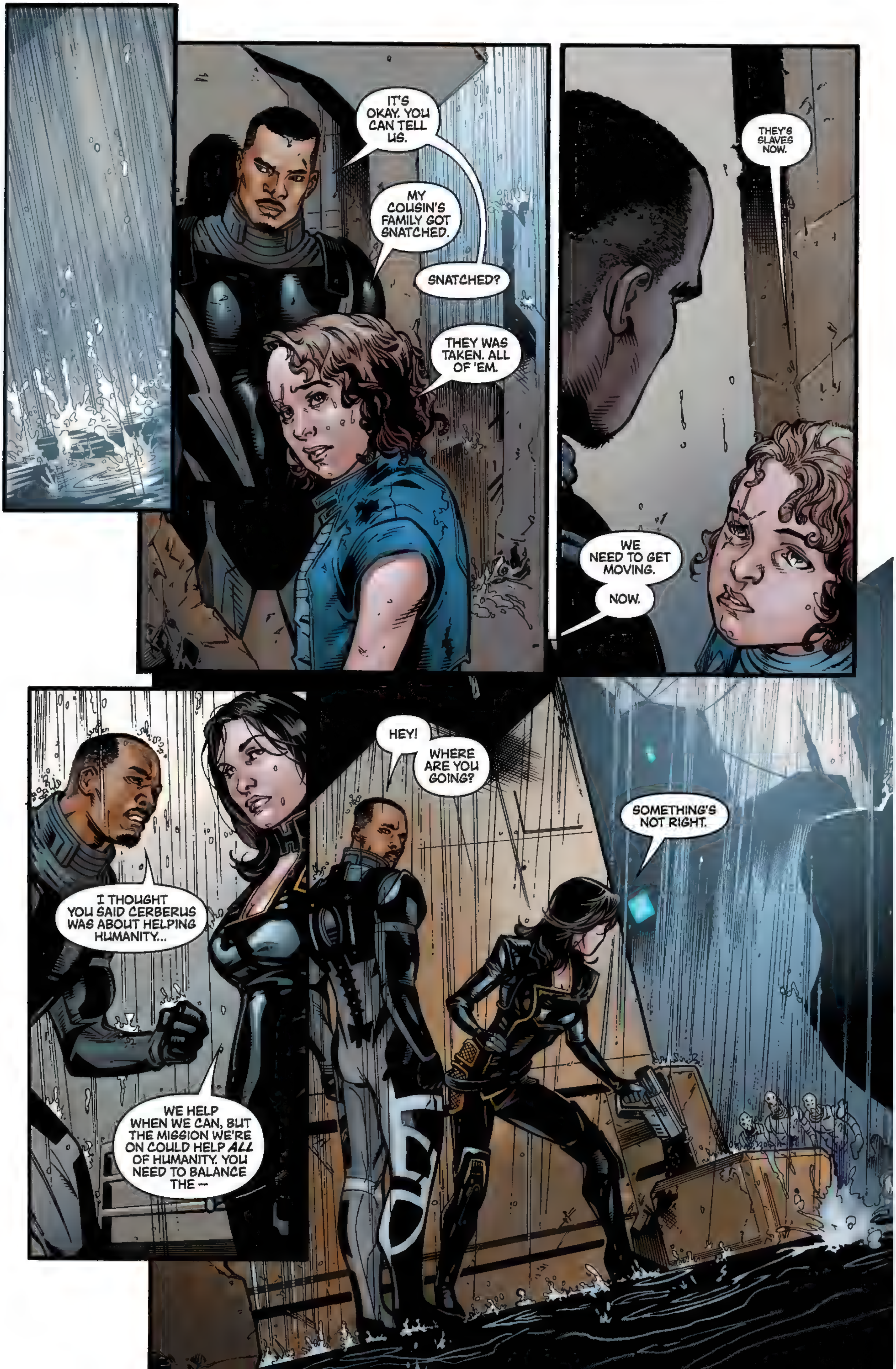

THIS IS IT.
WHERE ARE WE?
TERMINUS SYSTEMS.
YOU THINK SHEPARD'S ALL THE WAY OUT HERE?
CORRECT.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THE *NORMANDY*?
THEY WERE ATTACKED -- WE DON'T KNOW HOW OR BY WHO.
THE *NORMANDY* WAS DESTROYED. MOST OF THE CREW JETTISONED. BUT SHEPARD WAS NEVER REGISTERED ONBOARD AN ESCAPE POD.
THE ALLIANCE SCOURED THE DEBRIS BUT FOUND NO TRACE. THEY'VE DECLARED THE COMMANDER M.I.A. AND ARE GIVING UP THE SEARCH.
HERE. YOU DON'T WANT TO GO DOWN THERE WEARING AN ALLIANCE UNIFORM.
NICE.
THERE'S MORE WHERE THAT CAME FROM.

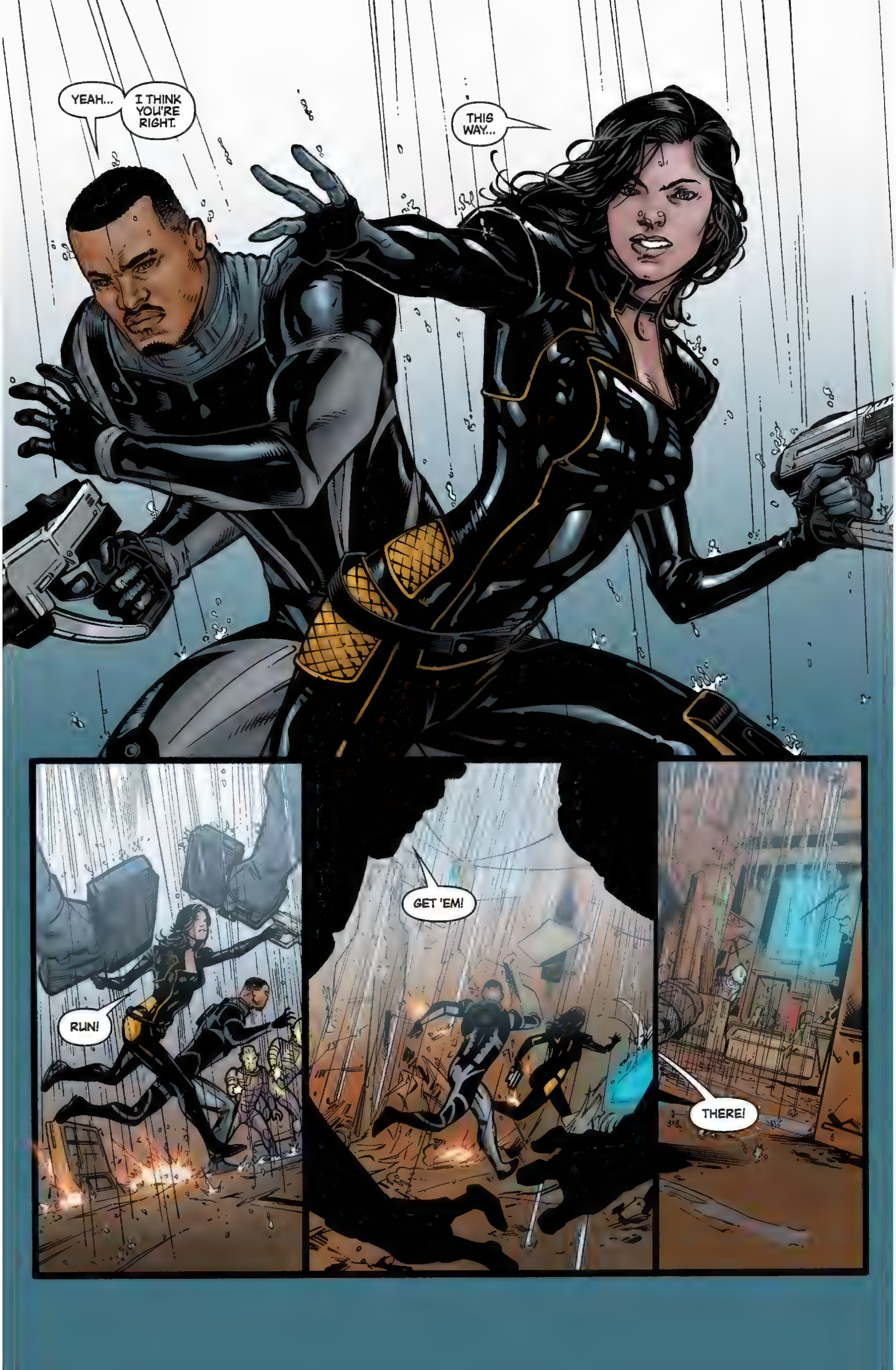

INTERESTING PLACE.
THE ALLIANCE DOESN'T LIKE TO GET ITS HANDS DIRTY IN PLACES LIKE THIS. BUT SOMETIMES --
-- YOU NEED TO GET A LITTLE DIRTY.
OH REALLY?
HEY!
YOU DON'T BELONG HERE, HUMAN.
ACTUALLY, I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT.

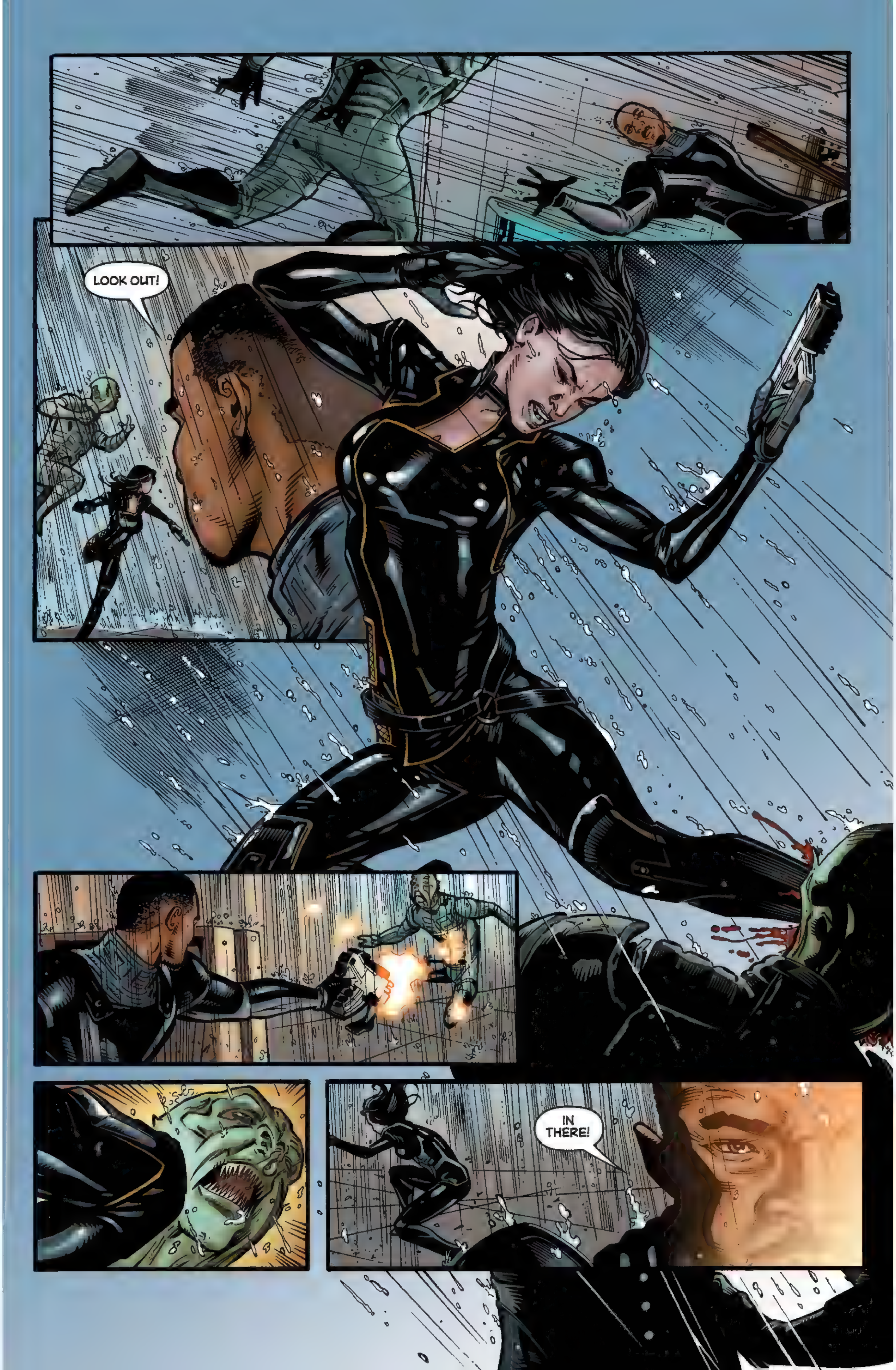

YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY FOR NOTHING.
THE CORPSE ISN'T HERE ANYMORE.
REALLY?
I THINK I WOULD'VE HEARD ABOUT THAT.
WHOEVER'S PAYING YOU FOR THE INFORMATION...I'LL PAY DOUBLE.
HALF NOW--
--THE OTHER HALF ONCE WE HAVE THE BODY.
HMM.
LIKE I SAID. IT'S NOT HERE.
OKAY. I'LL TAKE MY CREDITS BACK THEN.
117
121

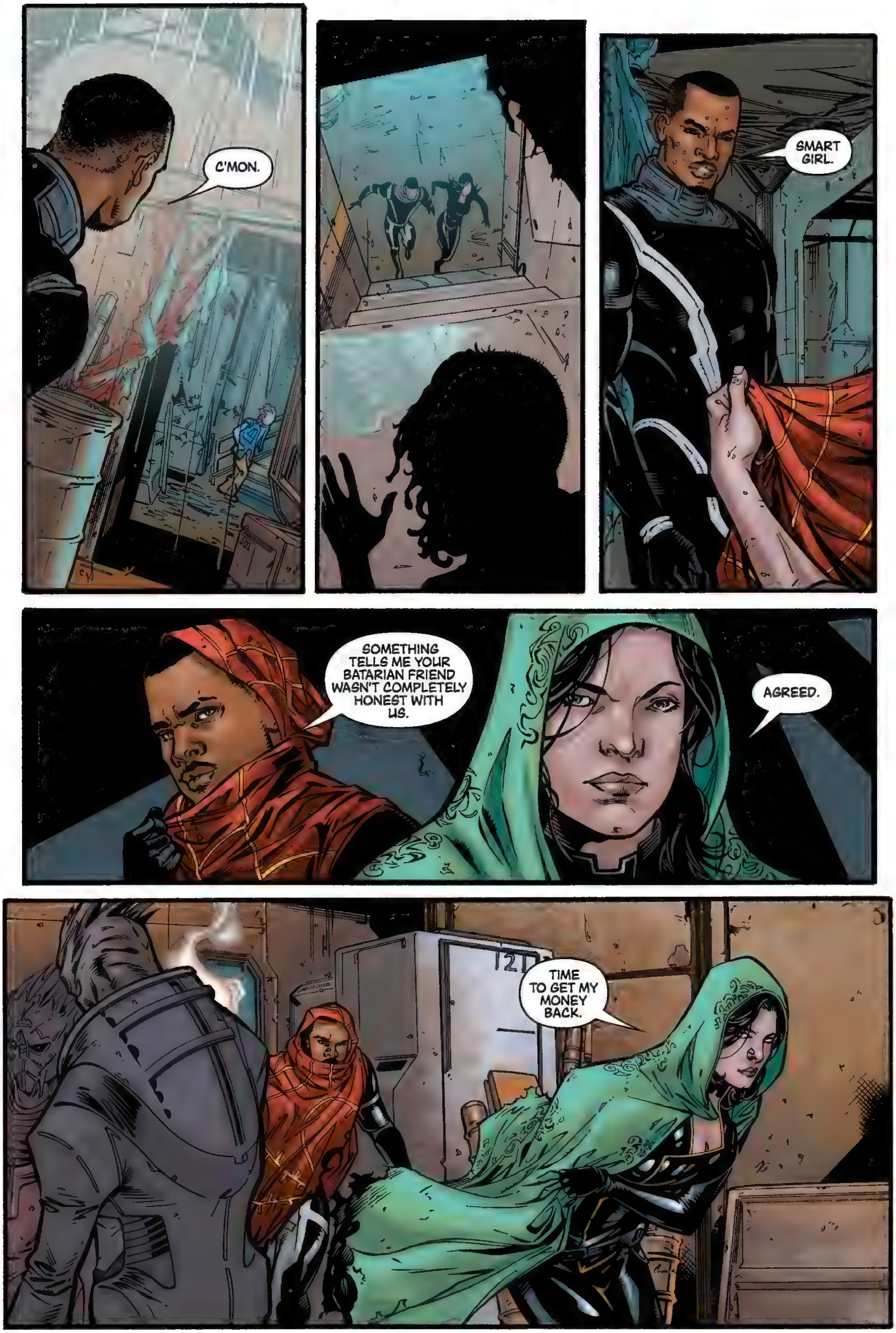

HOW'D YOU KNOW HE'D TAKE THE CREDITS?
I DIDN'T.
BUT IT'S A LOT HARDER TO TURN THEM DOWN ONCE YOU'RE HOLDING THEM.
AND WHY'D HE REFER TO SHEPARD AS A CORPSE?
BECAUSE THAT'S ALL THAT MIGHT BE LEFT.
IT'S THIS WAY. LET'S GO.
SERIOUSLY?
THEN WHAT THE HELL ARE WE DOING HERE?
MAKING SURE.
SHANKS FOR TWENTY CREDITS!
KNUCKLES FOR TEN!
YOU COULD'VE TOLD ME THAT BEFORE.
WOULD YOU HAVE COME?
MAYBE.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THE COMMANDER'S DEAD.
WE DON'T KNOW FOR CERTAIN.
OUR INTEL SAYS THE BODY'S BEING KEPT ALIVE IN A STASIS POD.

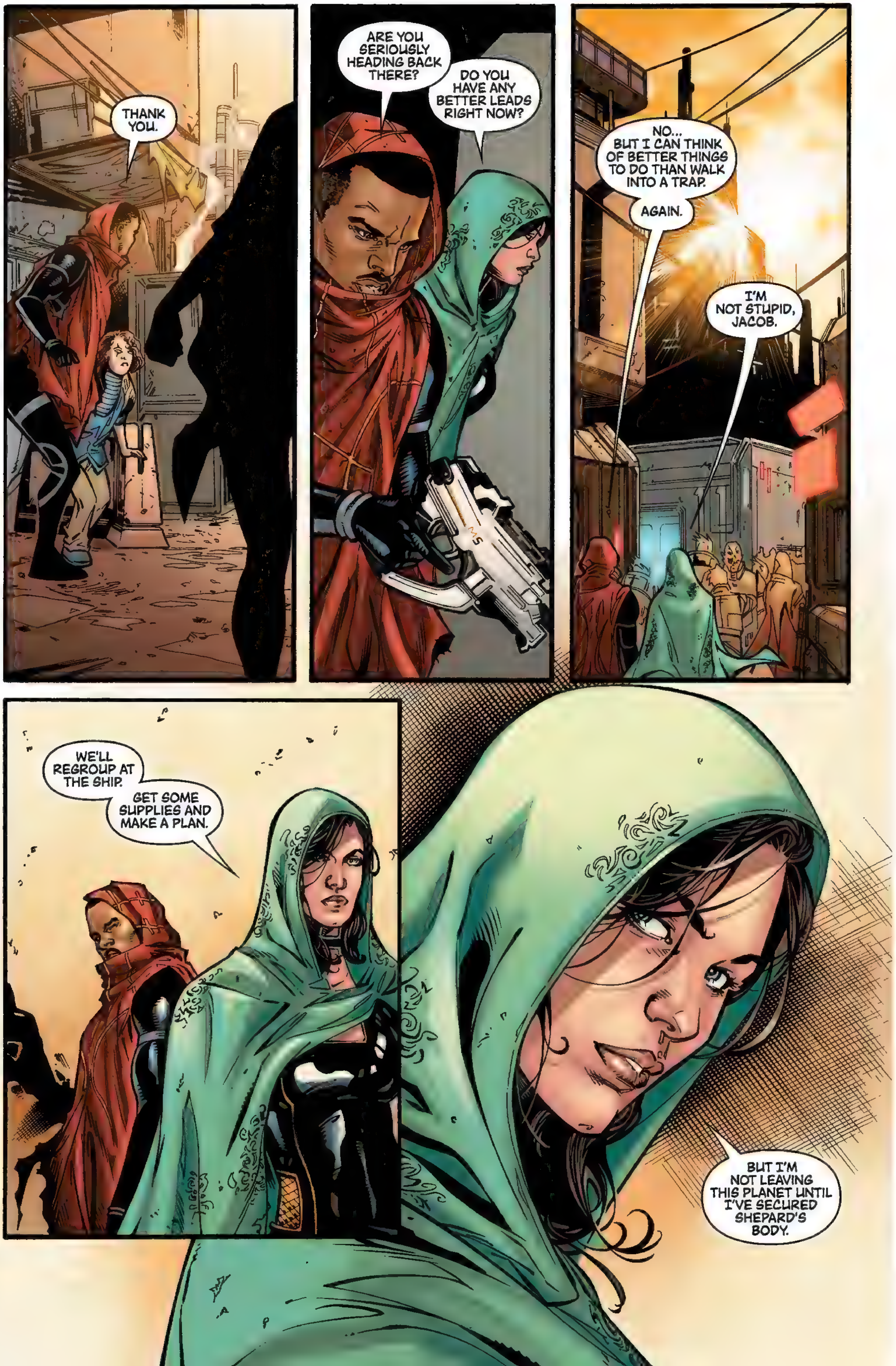

WHY AM I HERE? YOU DON'T NEED ME.
NO. BUT WE NEED PEOPLE LIKE YOU.
DAMN IT. WHERE THE HELL IS THIS PLACE?
AND YOU NEEDED TO SEE WHAT WE ARE CAPABLE OF.
BESIDES...ISN'T THIS BETTER THAN DRINKING YOURSELF TO DEATH ON THE CITADEL?
I'M RESERVING JUDGMENT.
LADY! LADY!
D'YOU HAVE ANY CREDITS?
SORRY, NO.
WE MIGHT HAVE SOMETHING, IF YOU CAN TELL US WHERE TO FIND THIS PLACE?
THAT'S A BAD PLACE. BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO PEOPLE THERE.
WHAT KIND OF BAD THINGS?
WELL...

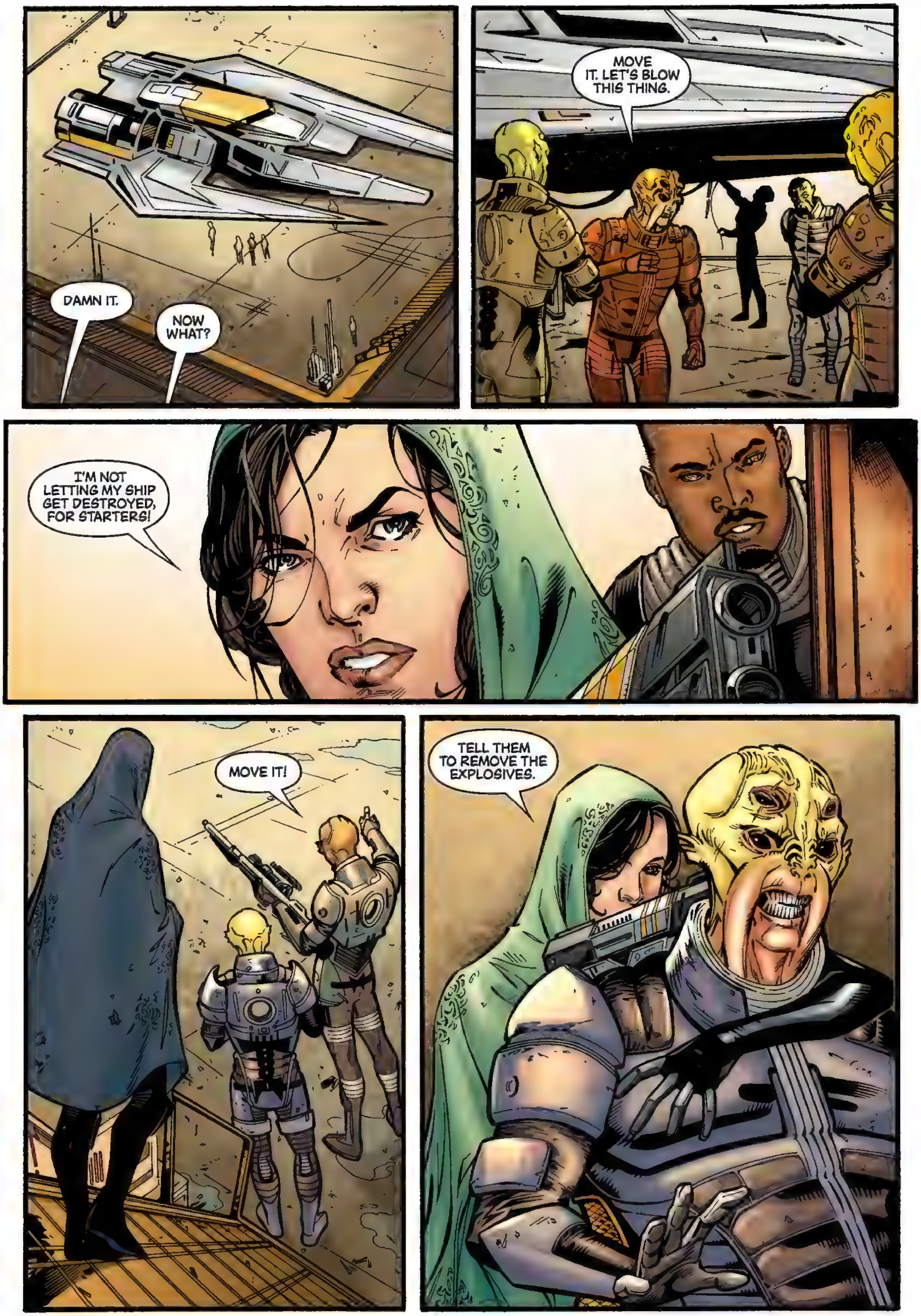

IT'S OKAY. YOU CAN TELL US.
MY COUSIN'S FAMILY GOT SNATCHED.
SNATCHED?
THEY WAS TAKEN. ALL OF 'EM.
THEY'S SLAVES NOW.
WE NEED TO GET MOVING.
NOW.
I THOUGHT YOU SAID CERBERUS WAS ABOUT HELPING HUMANITY...
WE HELP WHEN WE CAN, BUT THE MISSION WE'RE ON COULD HELP *ALL* OF HUMANITY. YOU NEED TO BALANCE THE --
HEY!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT.

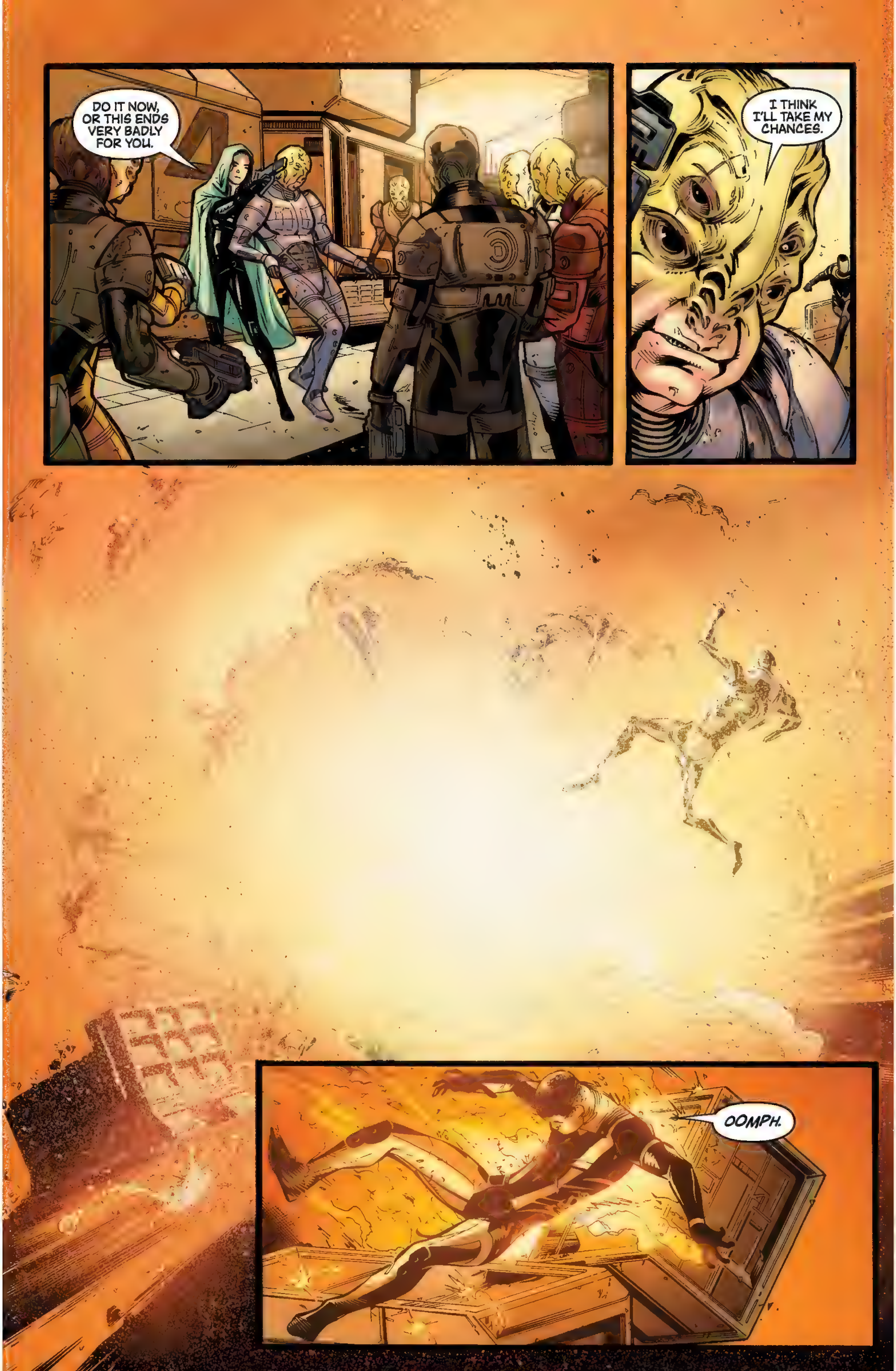

YEAH...
I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT.
THIS WAY...
RUN!
GET 'EM!
THERE!

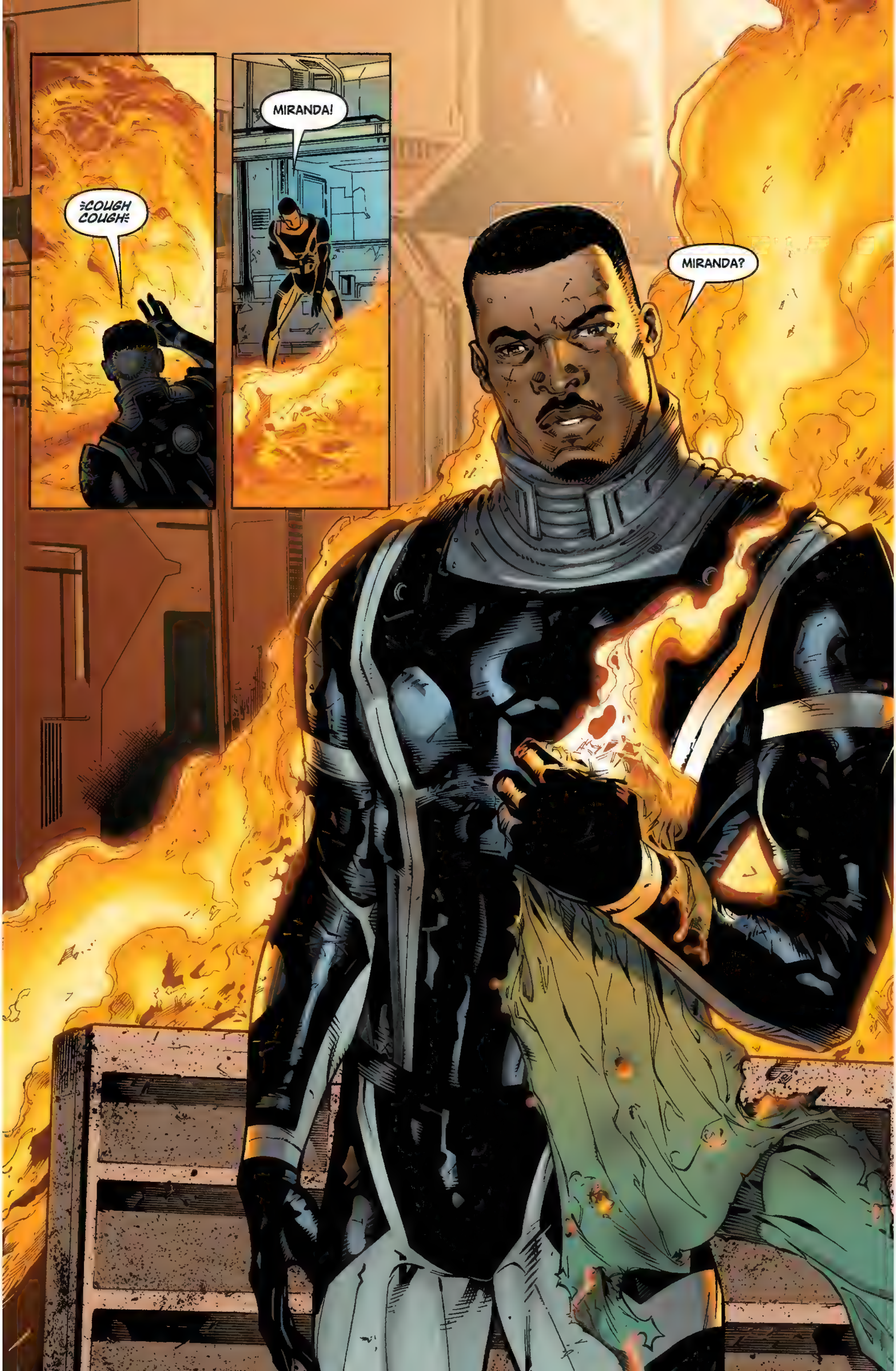

LOOK OUT!
IN THERE!

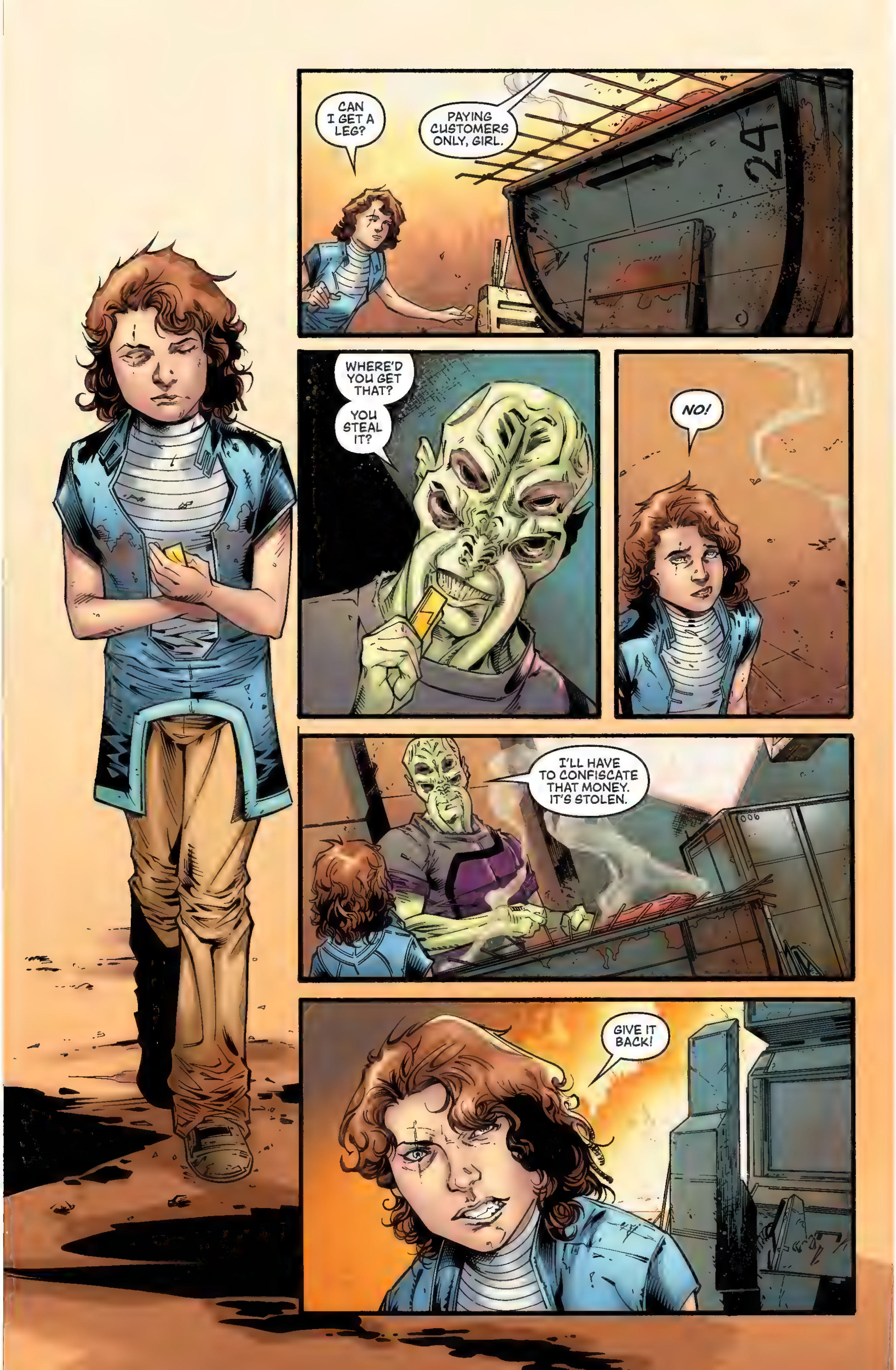

C'MON.
SMART GIRL.
SOMETHING TELLS ME YOUR BATARIAN FRIEND WASN'T COMPLETELY HONEST WITH US.
AGREED.
TIME TO GET MY MONEY BACK.

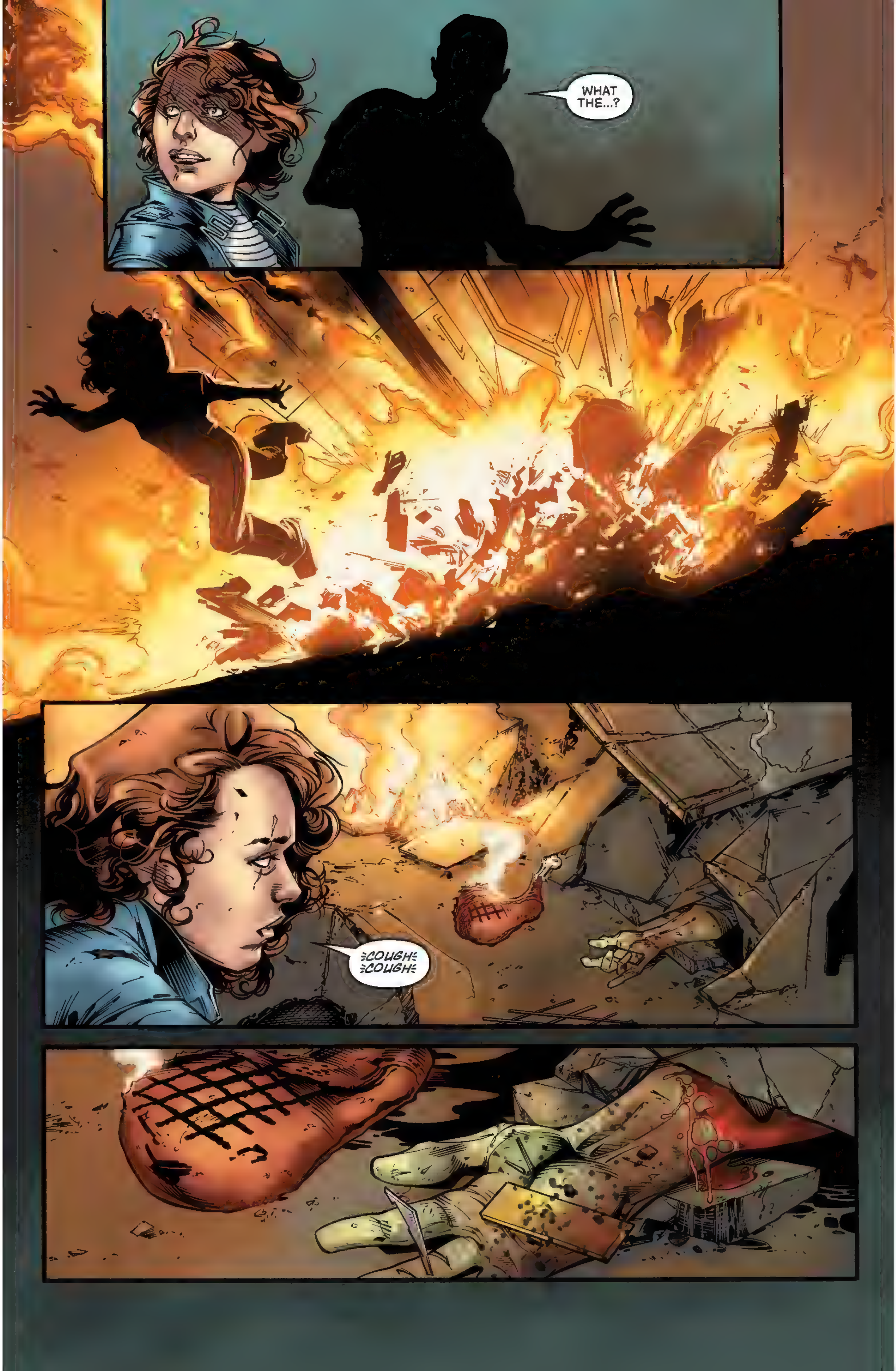

THANK YOU.
ARE YOU SERIOUSLY HEADING BACK THERE?
DO YOU HAVE ANY BETTER LEADS RIGHT NOW?
NO... BUT I CAN THINK OF BETTER THINGS TO DO THAN WALK INTO A TRAP.
AGAIN.
I'M NOT STUPID, JACOB.
WE'LL REGROUP AT THE SHIP.
GET SOME SUPPLIES AND MAKE A PLAN.
BUT I'M NOT LEAVING THIS PLANET UNTIL I'VE SECURED SHEPARD'S BODY.

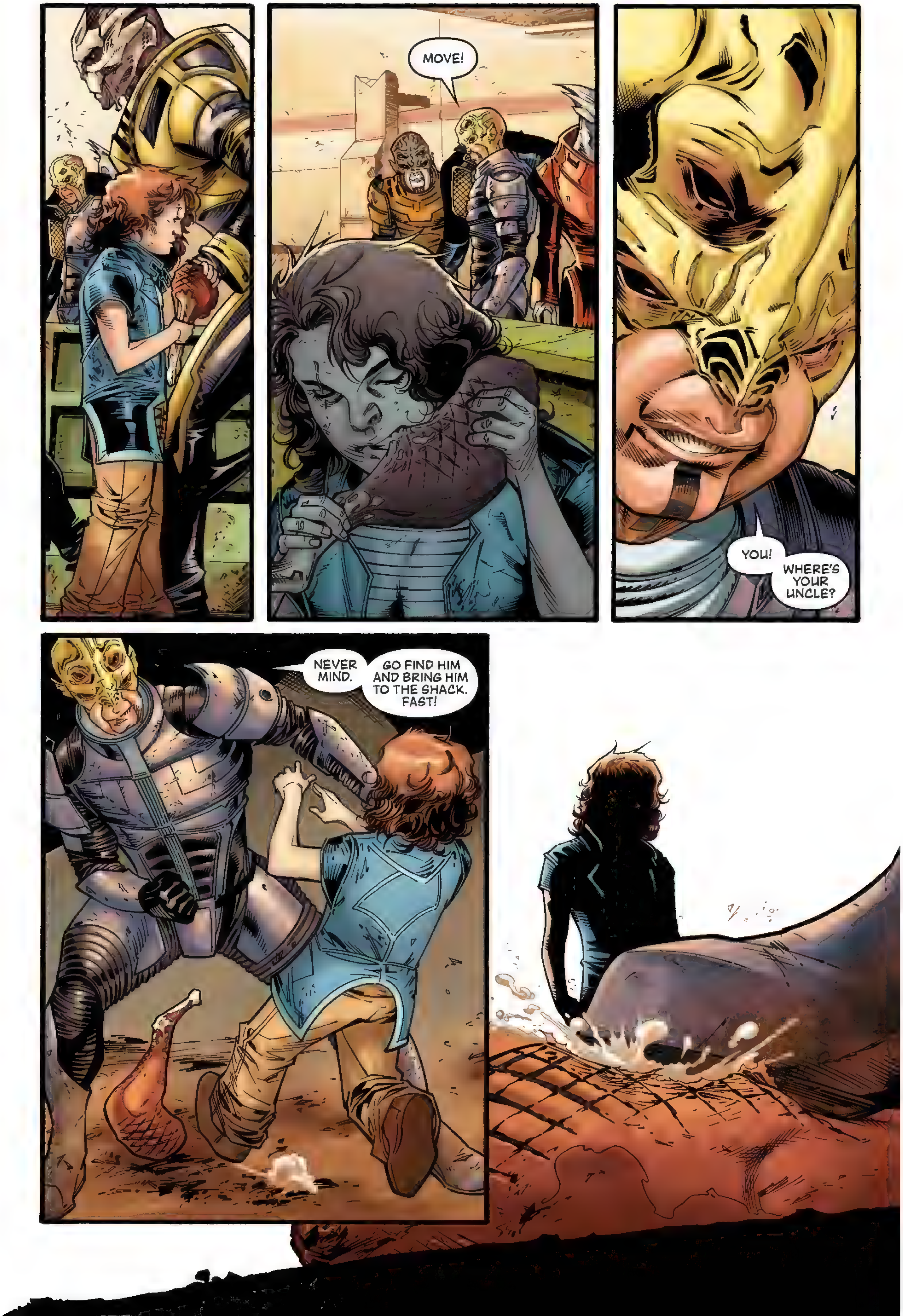

DAMN IT.
NOW WHAT?
MOVE IT. LET'S BLOW THIS THING.
I'M NOT LETTING MY SHIP GET DESTROYED, FOR STARTERS!
MOVE IT!
TELL THEM TO REMOVE THE EXPLOSIVES.

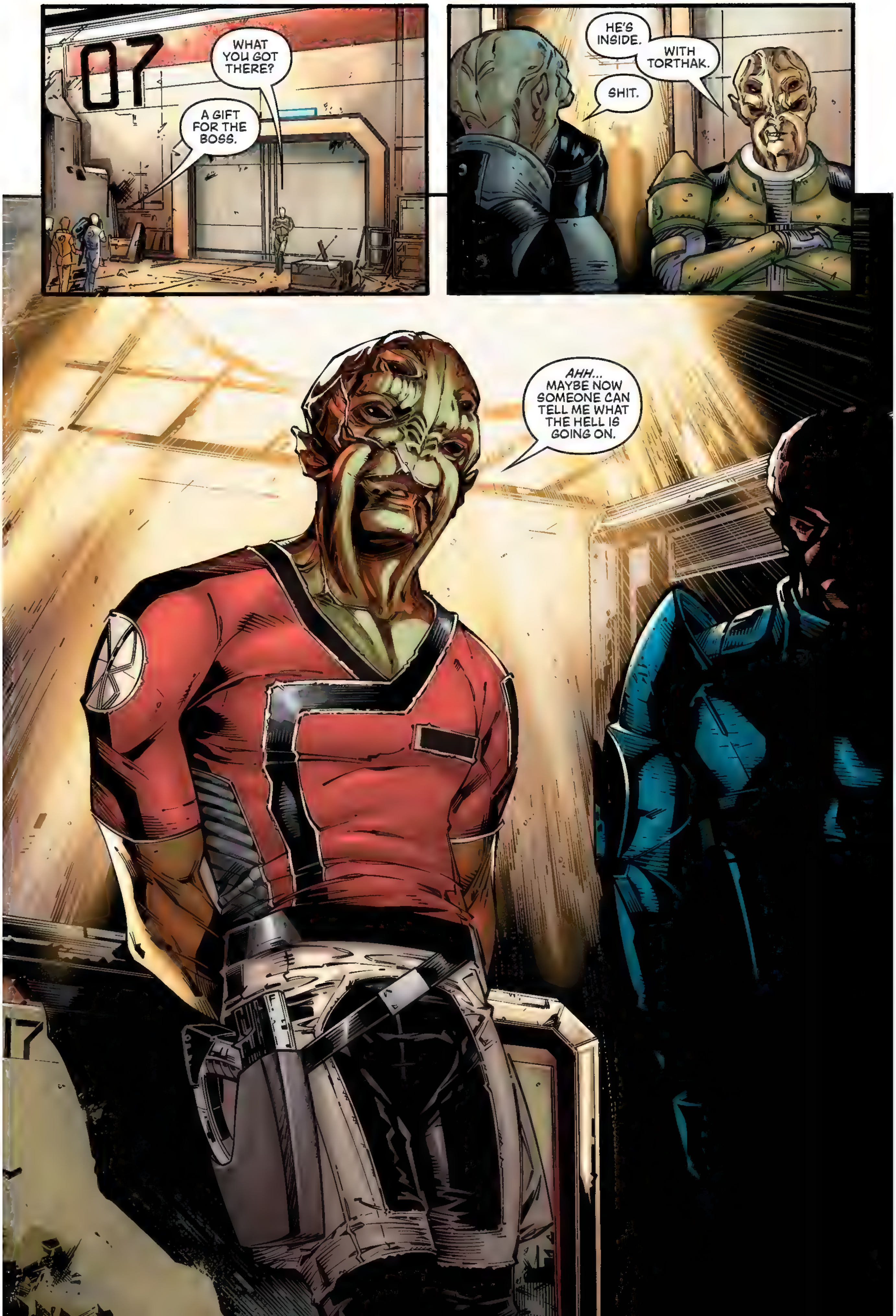

DO IT NOW, OR THIS ENDS VERY BADLY FOR YOU.
I THINK I'LL TAKE MY CHANCES.
OOMPH.

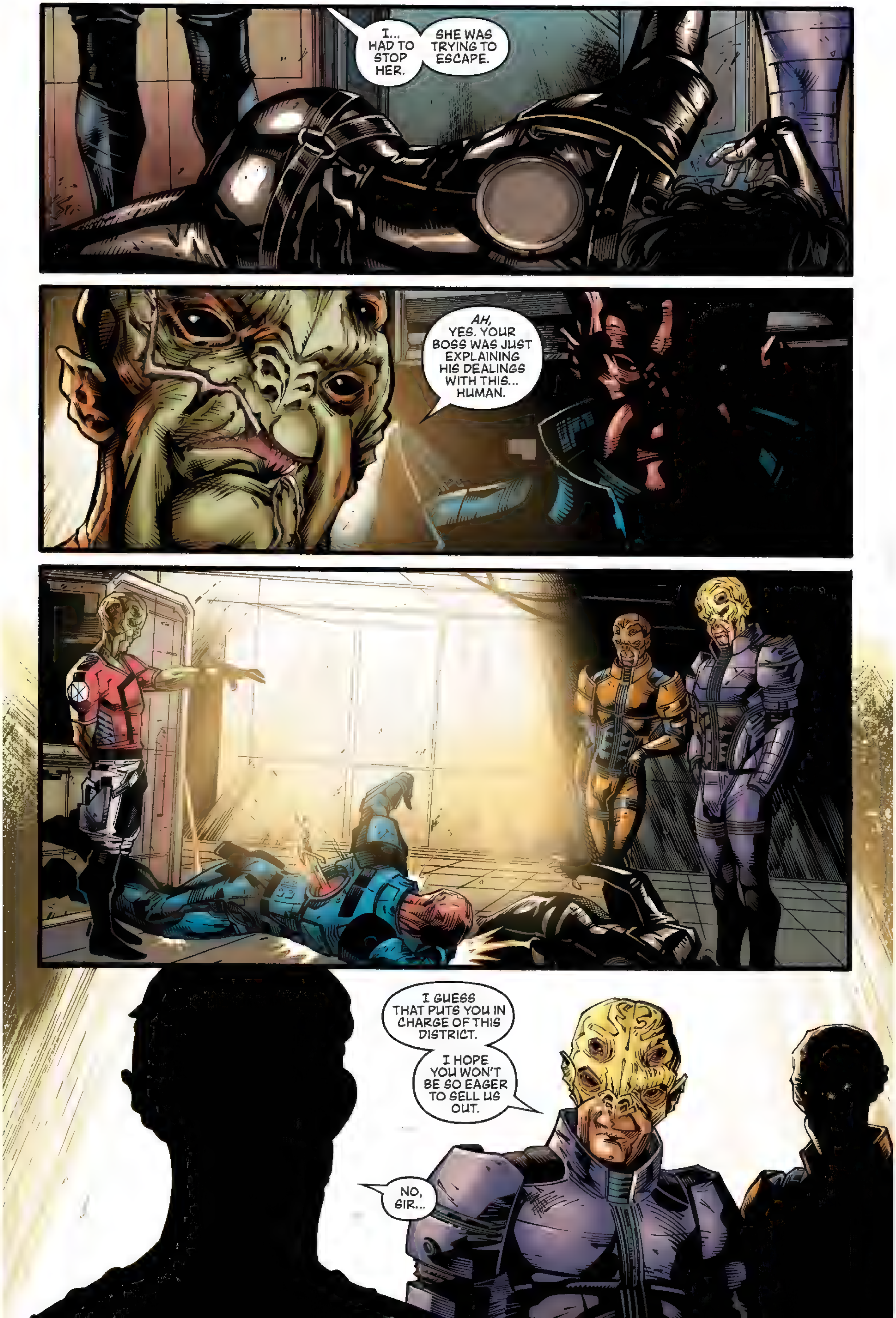

COUGH COUGH
MIRANDA!
MIRANDA?

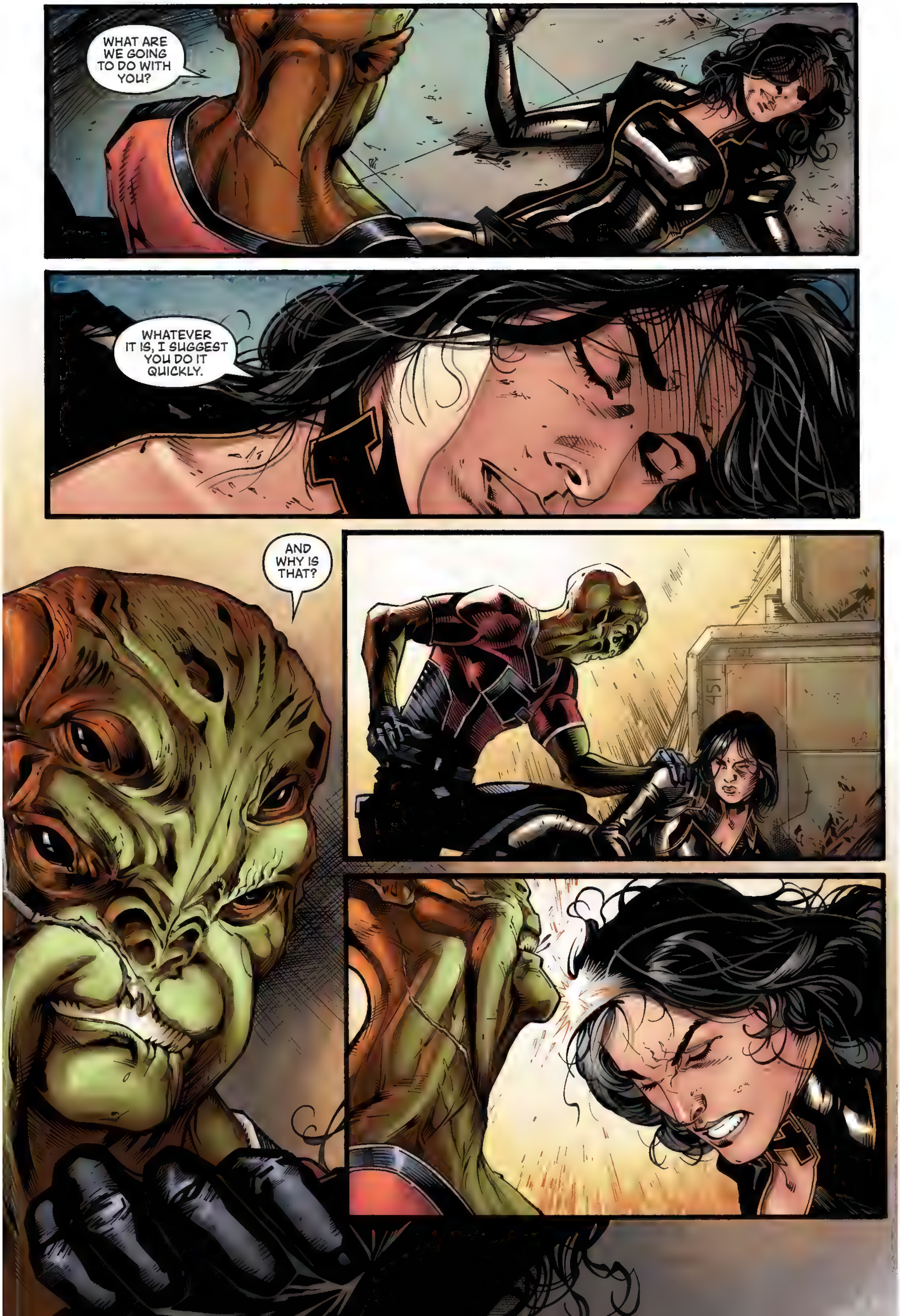

CAN I GET A LEG?
PAYING CUSTOMERS ONLY, GIRL.
24
WHERE'D YOU GET THAT?
YOU STEAL IT?
NO!
I'LL HAVE TO CONFISCATE THAT MONEY. IT'S STOLEN.
006
GIVE IT BACK!

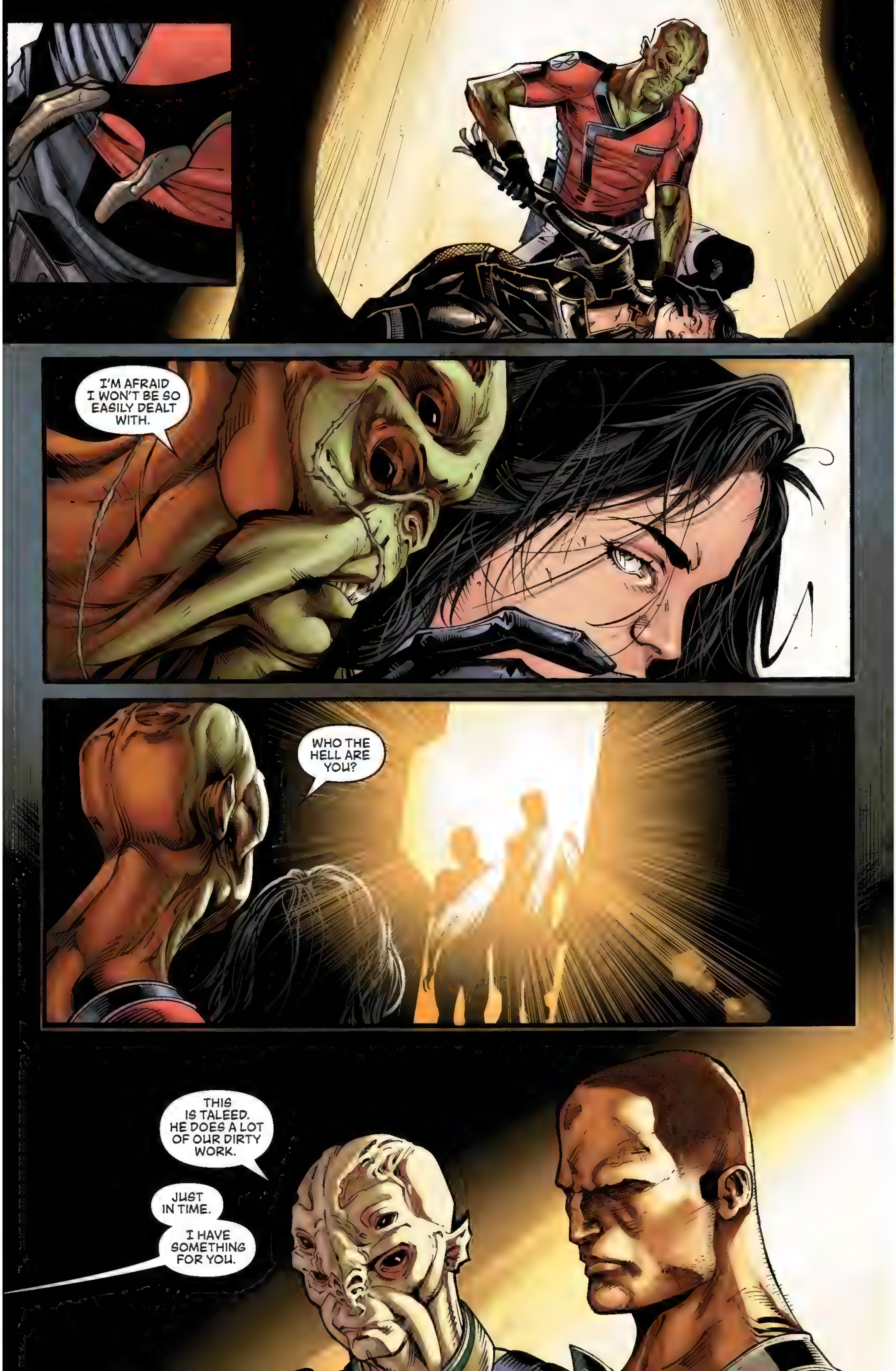

WHAT THE...?
COUGH COUGH

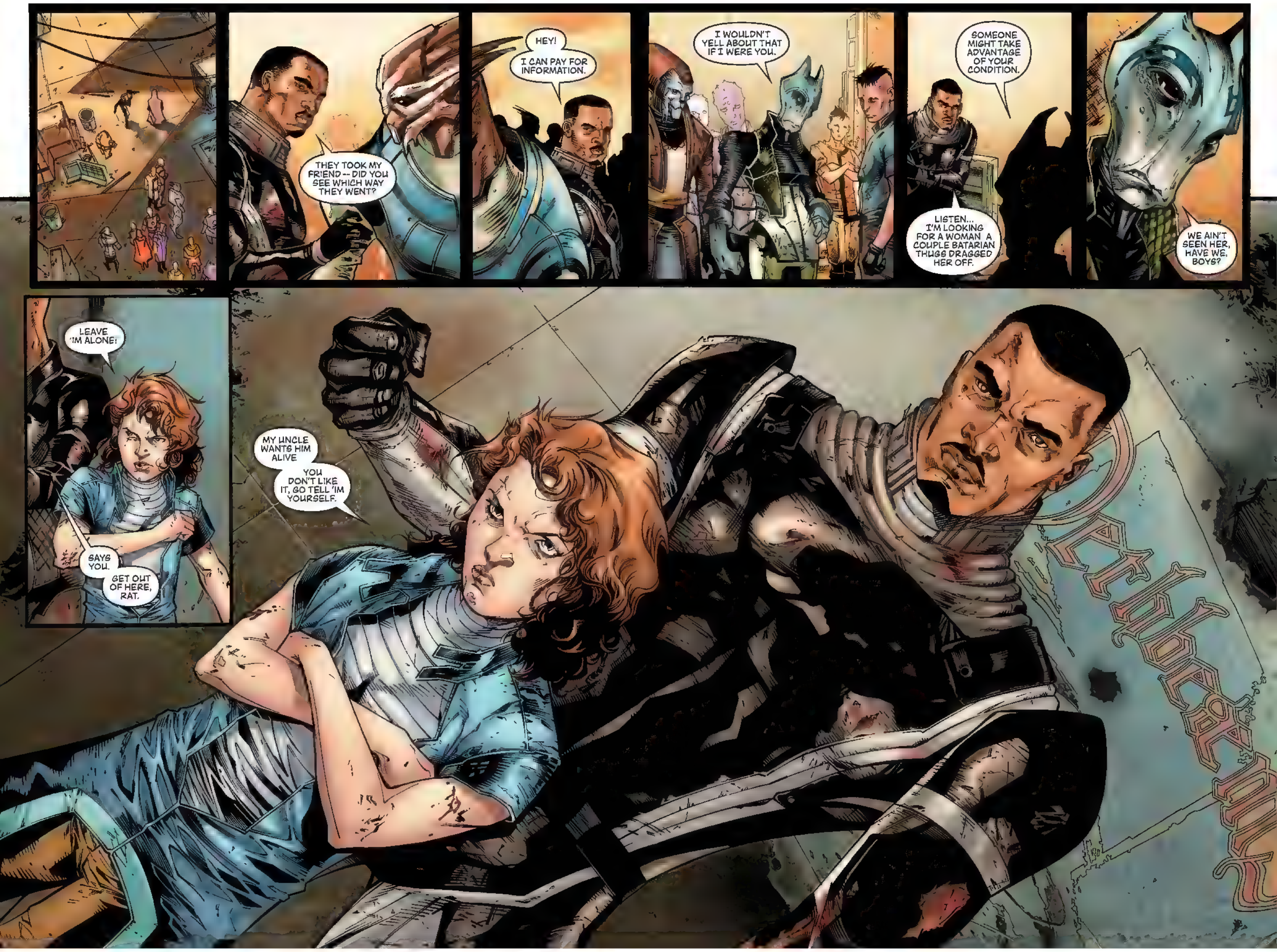

MOVE!
YOU!
WHERE'S YOUR UNCLE?
NEVER MIND.
GO FIND HIM AND BRING HIM TO THE SHACK. FAST!

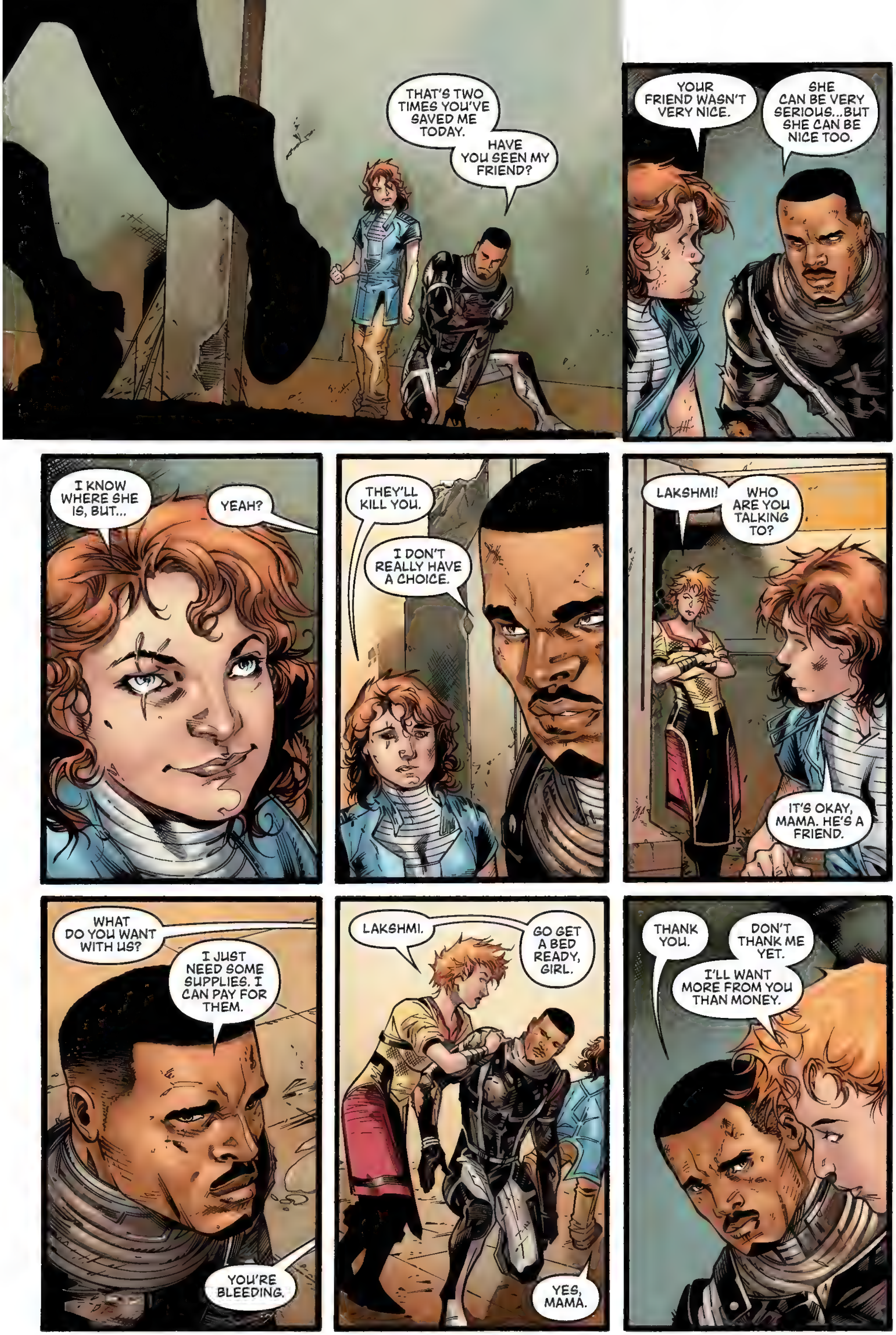

07
WHAT YOU GOT THERE?
A GIFT FOR THE BOSS.
HE'S INSIDE.
WITH TORTHAK.
SHIT.
AHH... MAYBE NOW SOMEONE CAN TELL ME WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON.
17

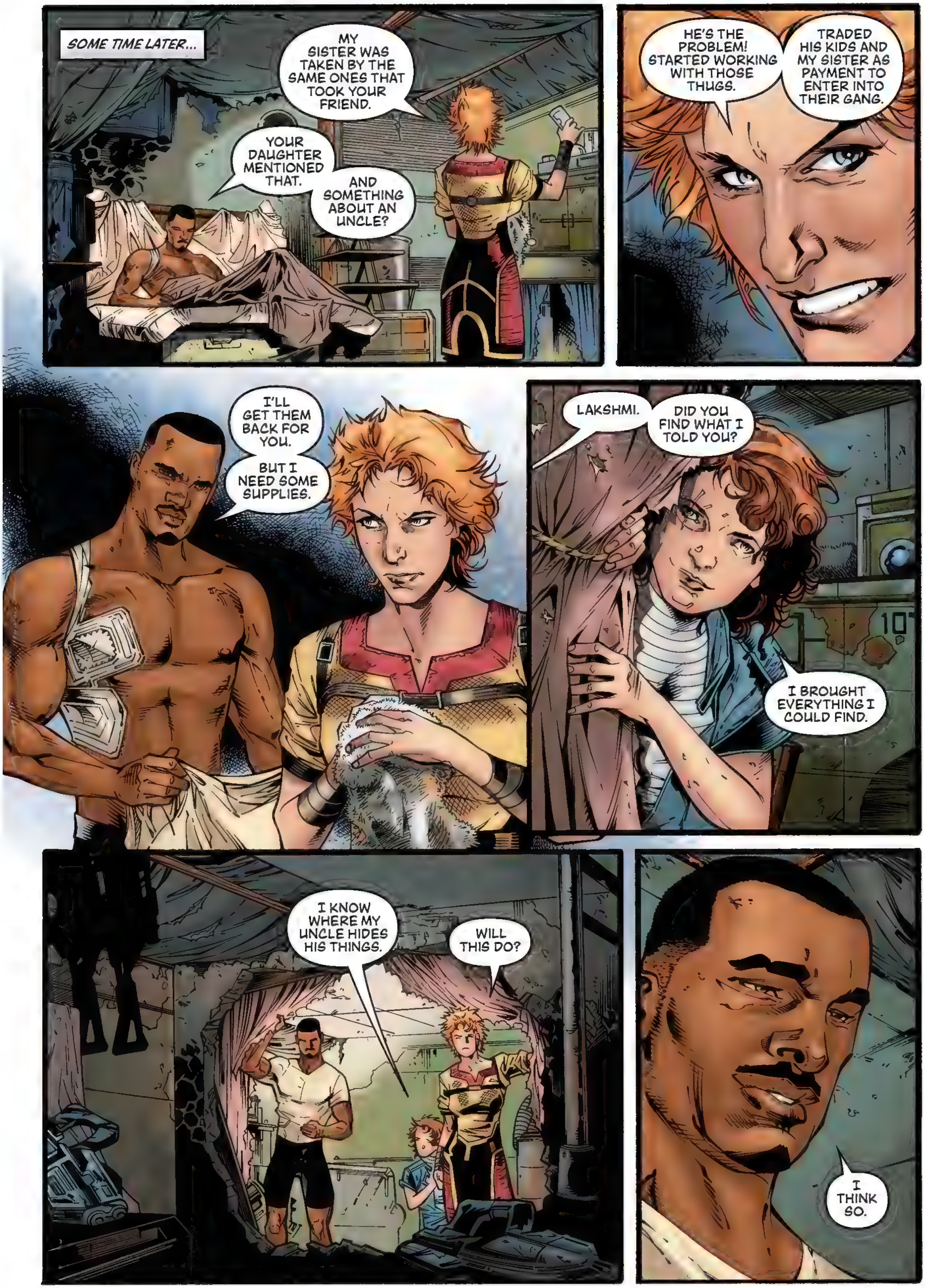

I... HAD TO STOP HER.
SHE WAS TRYING TO ESCAPE.
AH, YES. YOUR BOSS WAS JUST EXPLAINING HIS DEALINGS WITH THIS... HUMAN.
I GUESS THAT PUTS YOU IN CHARGE OF THIS DISTRICT.
I HOPE YOU WON'T BE SO EAGER TO SELL US OUT.
NO, SIR...

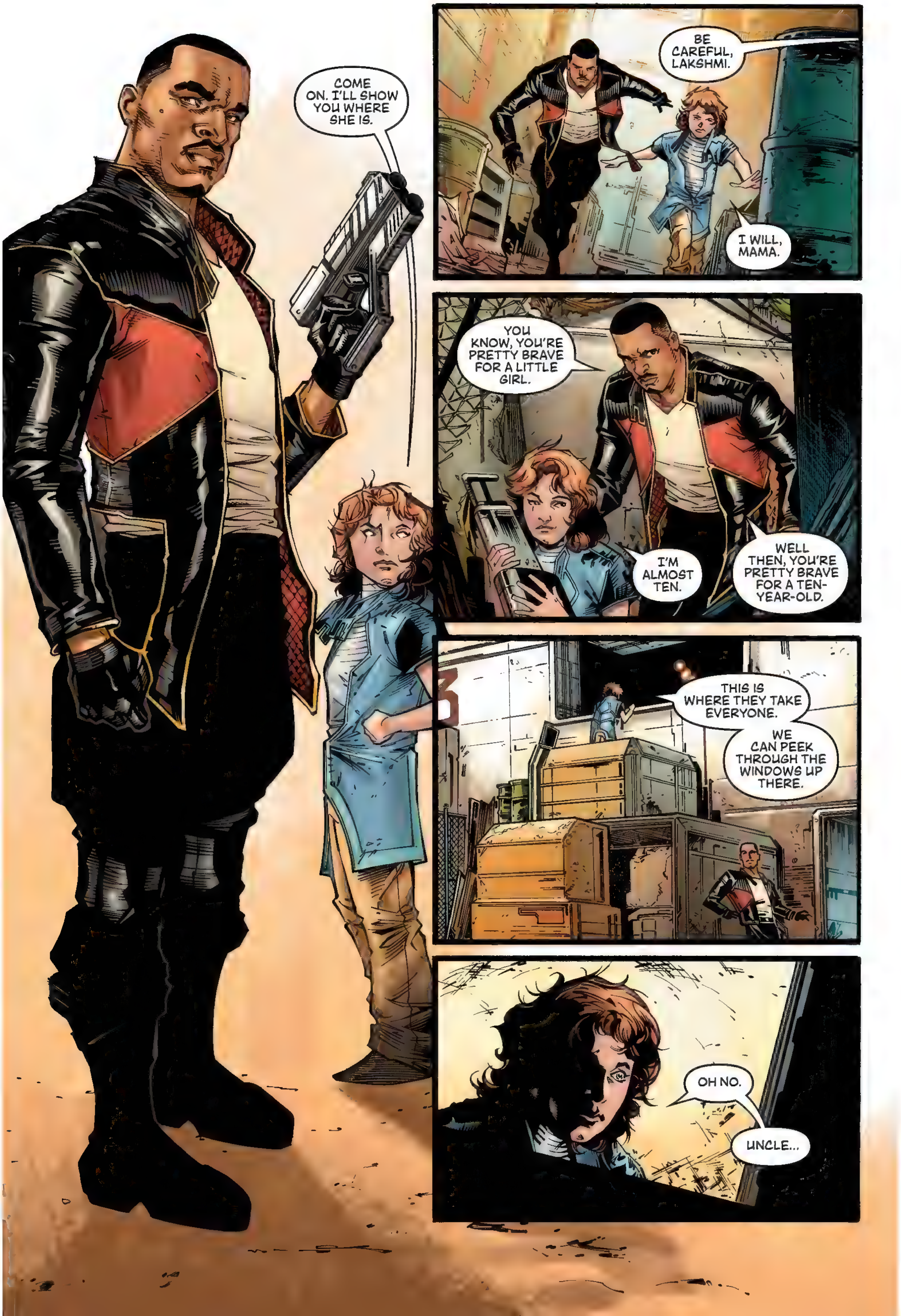

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO WITH YOU?
WHATEVER IT IS, I SUGGEST YOU DO IT QUICKLY.
AND WHY IS THAT?
451

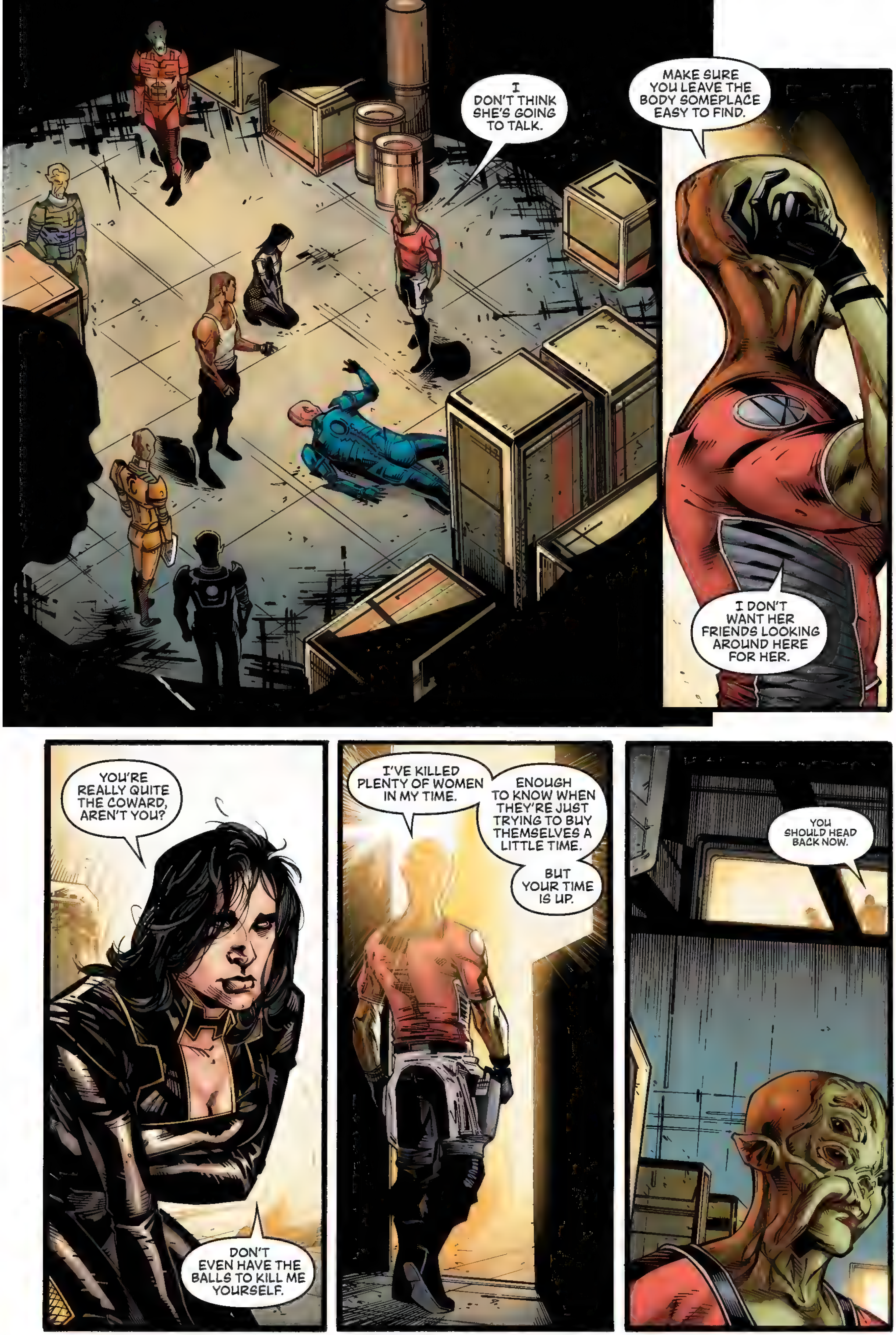

I'M AFRAID I WON'T BE SO EASILY DEALT WITH.
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
THIS IS TALEED. HE DOES A LOT OF OUR DIRTY WORK.
JUST IN TIME.
I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU.

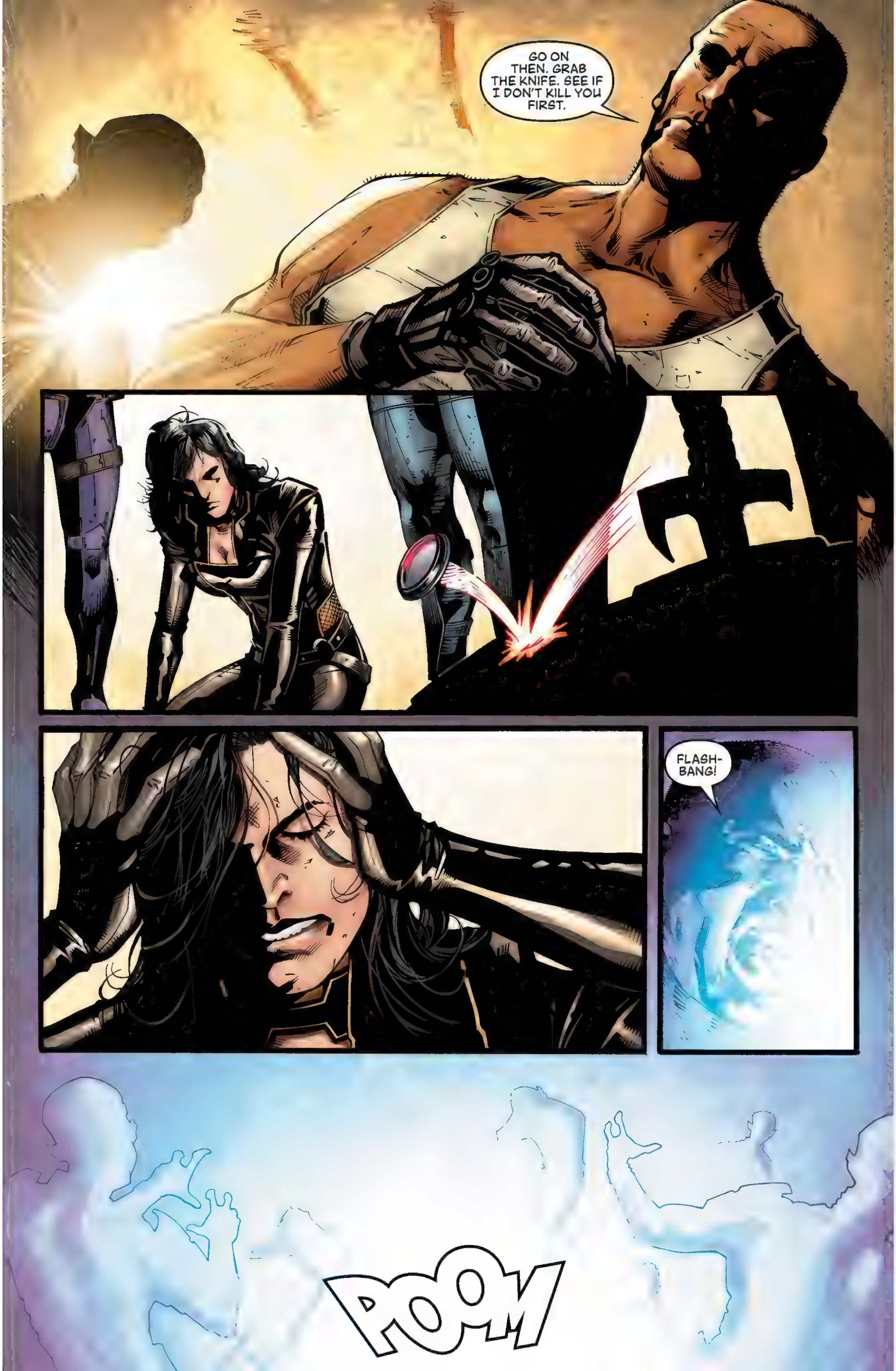

THEY TOOK MY FRIEND -- DID YOU SEE WHICH WAY THEY WENT?
HEY!
I CAN PAY FOR INFORMATION.
I WOULDN'T YELL ABOUT THAT IF I WERE YOU.
SOMEONE MIGHT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR CONDITION.
LISTEN... I'M LOOKING FOR A WOMAN A COUPLE BATARIAN THUGS DRAGGED HER OFF.
WE AIN'T SEEN HER, HAVE WE, BOYS?
LEAVE 'IM ALONE!
SAYS YOU.
GET OUT OF HERE, RAT.
MY UNCLE WANTS HIM ALIVE
YOU DON'T LIKE IT, GO TELL 'IM YOURSELF.


THAT'S TWO TIMES YOU'VE SAVED ME TODAY.
HAVE YOU SEEN MY FRIEND?
YOUR FRIEND WASN'T VERY NICE.
SHE CAN BE VERY SERIOUS...BUT SHE CAN BE NICE TOO.
I KNOW WHERE SHE IS, BUT...
YEAH?
THEY'LL KILL YOU.
I DON'T REALLY HAVE A CHOICE.
LAKSHMI!
WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?
IT'S OKAY, MAMA. HE'S A FRIEND.
WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH US?
I JUST NEED SOME SUPPLIES. I CAN PAY FOR THEM.
YOU'RE BLEEDING.
LAKSHMI.
GO GET A BED READY, GIRL.
YES, MAMA.
THANK YOU.
DON'T THANK ME YET.
I'LL WANT MORE FROM YOU THAN MONEY.


SOME TIME LATER...
MY SISTER WAS TAKEN BY THE SAME ONES THAT TOOK YOUR FRIEND.
YOUR DAUGHTER MENTIONED THAT.
AND SOMETHING ABOUT AN UNCLE?
HE'S THE PROBLEM! STARTED WORKING WITH THOSE THUGS.
TRADED HIS KIDS AND MY SISTER AS PAYMENT TO ENTER INTO THEIR GANG.
I'LL GET THEM BACK FOR YOU.
BUT I NEED SOME SUPPLIES.
LAKSHMI.
DID YOU FIND WHAT I TOLD YOU?
I BROUGHT EVERYTHING I COULD FIND.
I KNOW WHERE MY UNCLE HIDES HIS THINGS.
WILL THIS DO?
I THINK SO.


COME ON. I'LL SHOW YOU WHERE SHE IS.
BE CAREFUL, LAKSHMI.
I WILL, MAMA.
YOU KNOW, YOU'RE PRETTY BRAVE FOR A LITTLE GIRL.
I'M ALMOST TEN.
WELL THEN, YOU'RE PRETTY BRAVE FOR A TEN-YEAR-OLD.
THIS IS WHERE THEY TAKE EVERYONE.
WE CAN PEEK THROUGH THE WINDOWS UP THERE.
OH NO.
UNCLE...


I DON'T THINK SHE'S GOING TO TALK.
MAKE SURE YOU LEAVE THE BODY SOMEPLACE EASY TO FIND.
I DON'T WANT HER FRIENDS LOOKING AROUND HERE FOR HER.
YOU'RE REALLY QUITE THE COWARD, AREN'T YOU?
DON'T EVEN HAVE THE BALLS TO KILL ME YOURSELF.
I'VE KILLED PLENTY OF WOMEN IN MY TIME.
ENOUGH TO KNOW WHEN THEY'RE JUST TRYING TO BUY THEMSELVES A LITTLE TIME.
BUT YOUR TIME IS UP.
YOU SHOULD HEAD BACK NOW.


GO ON THEN. GRAB THE KNIFE. SEE IF I DON'T KILL YOU FIRST.
FLASH-BANG!
POOM

BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
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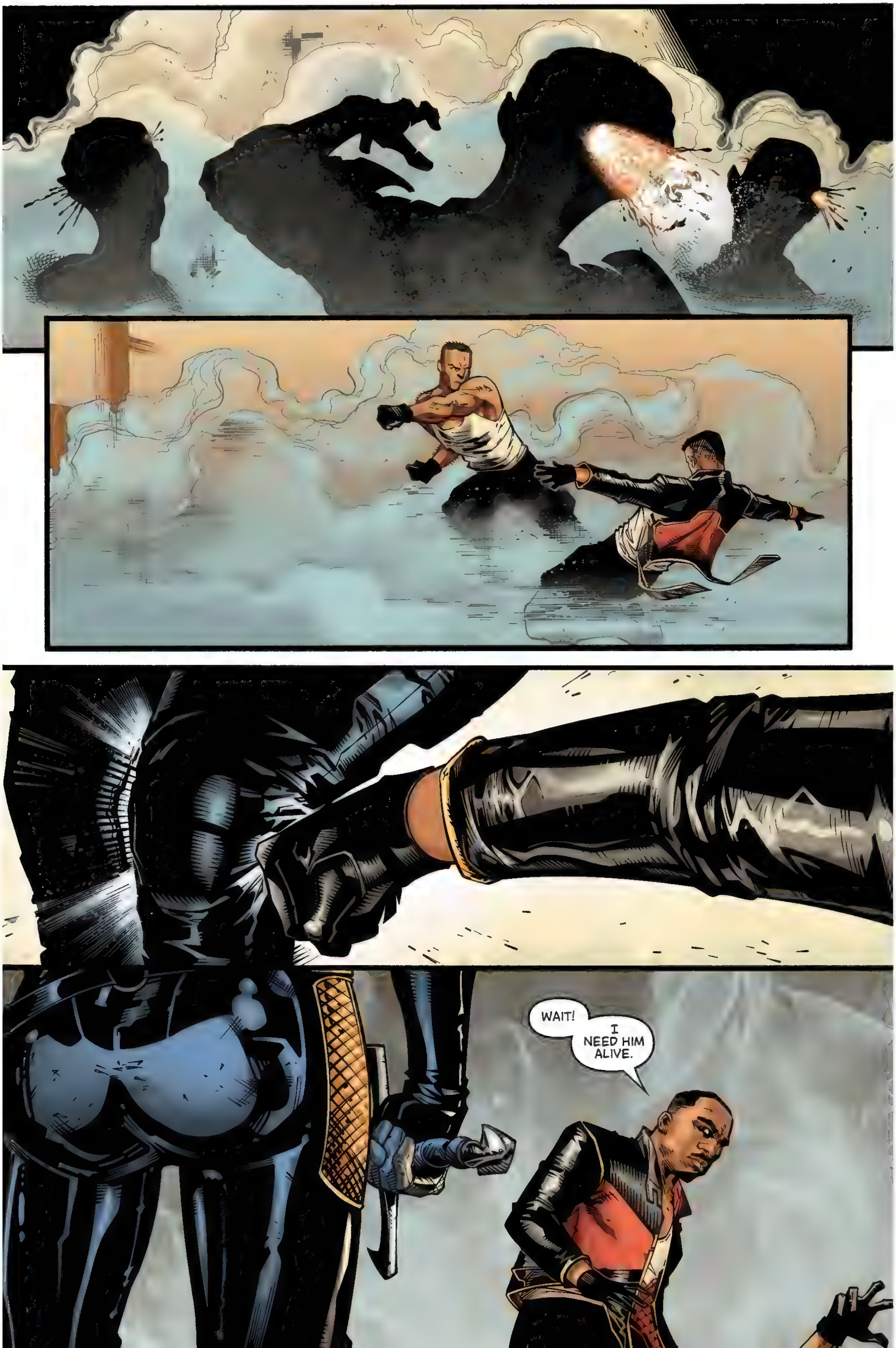
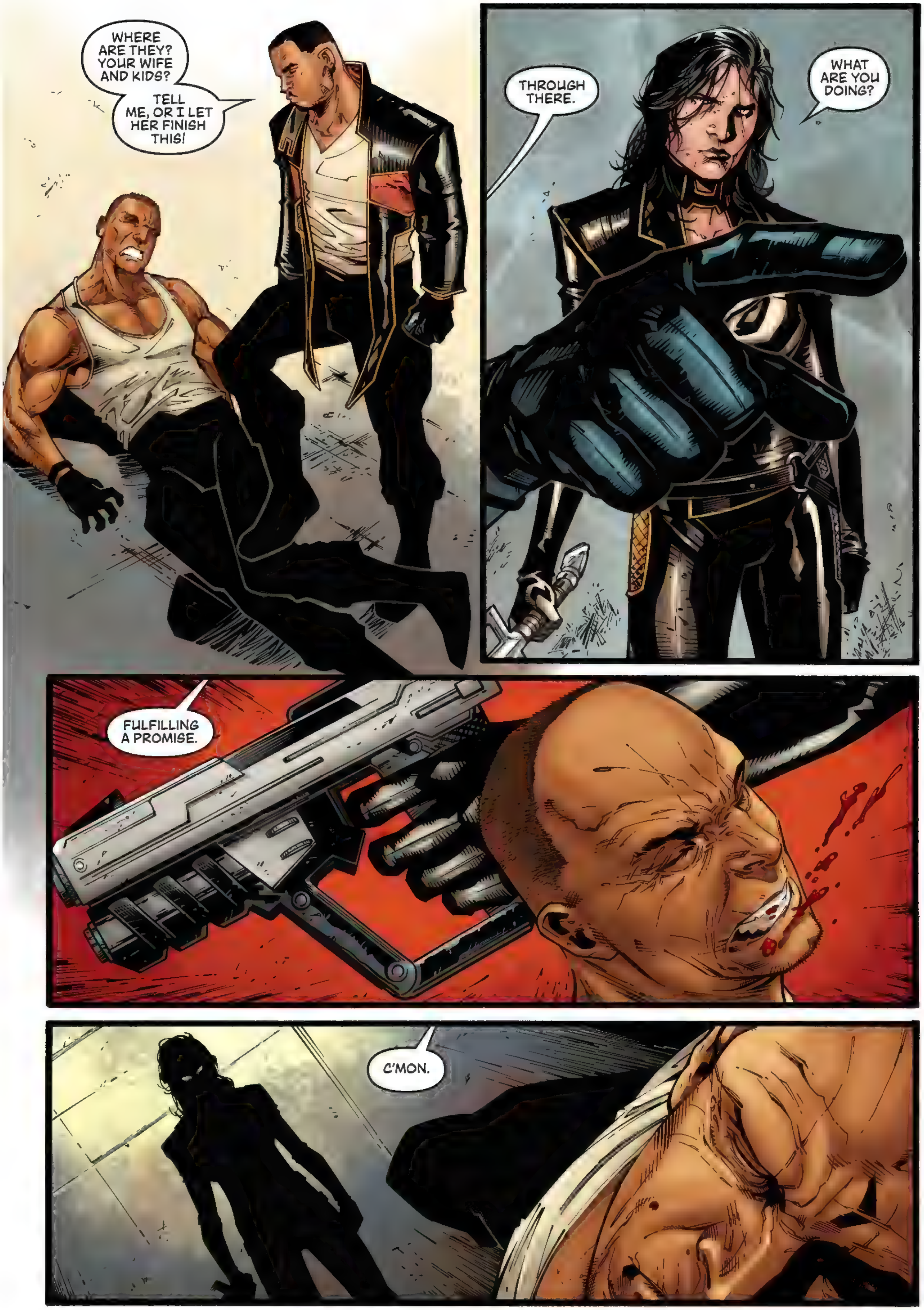
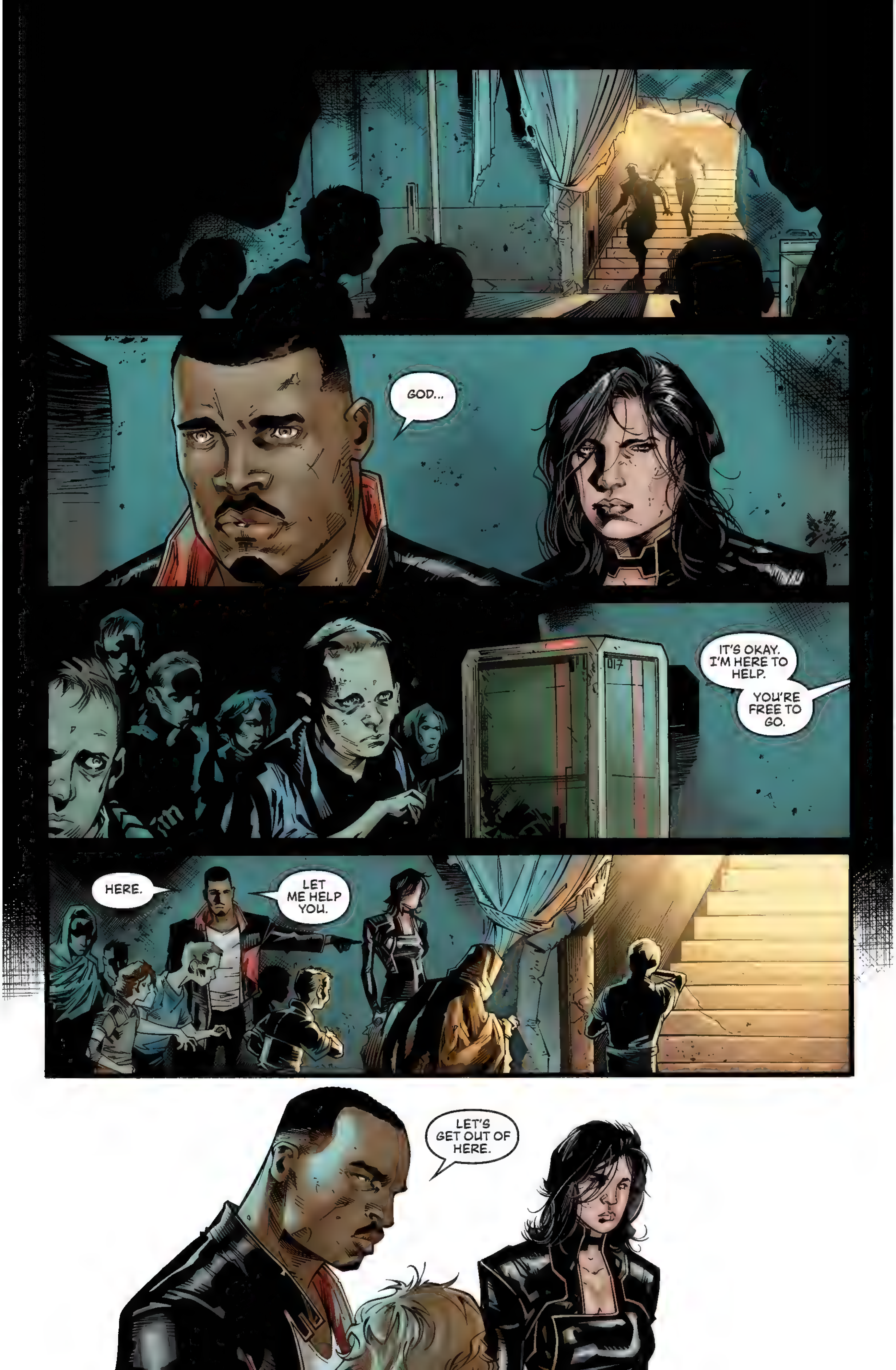
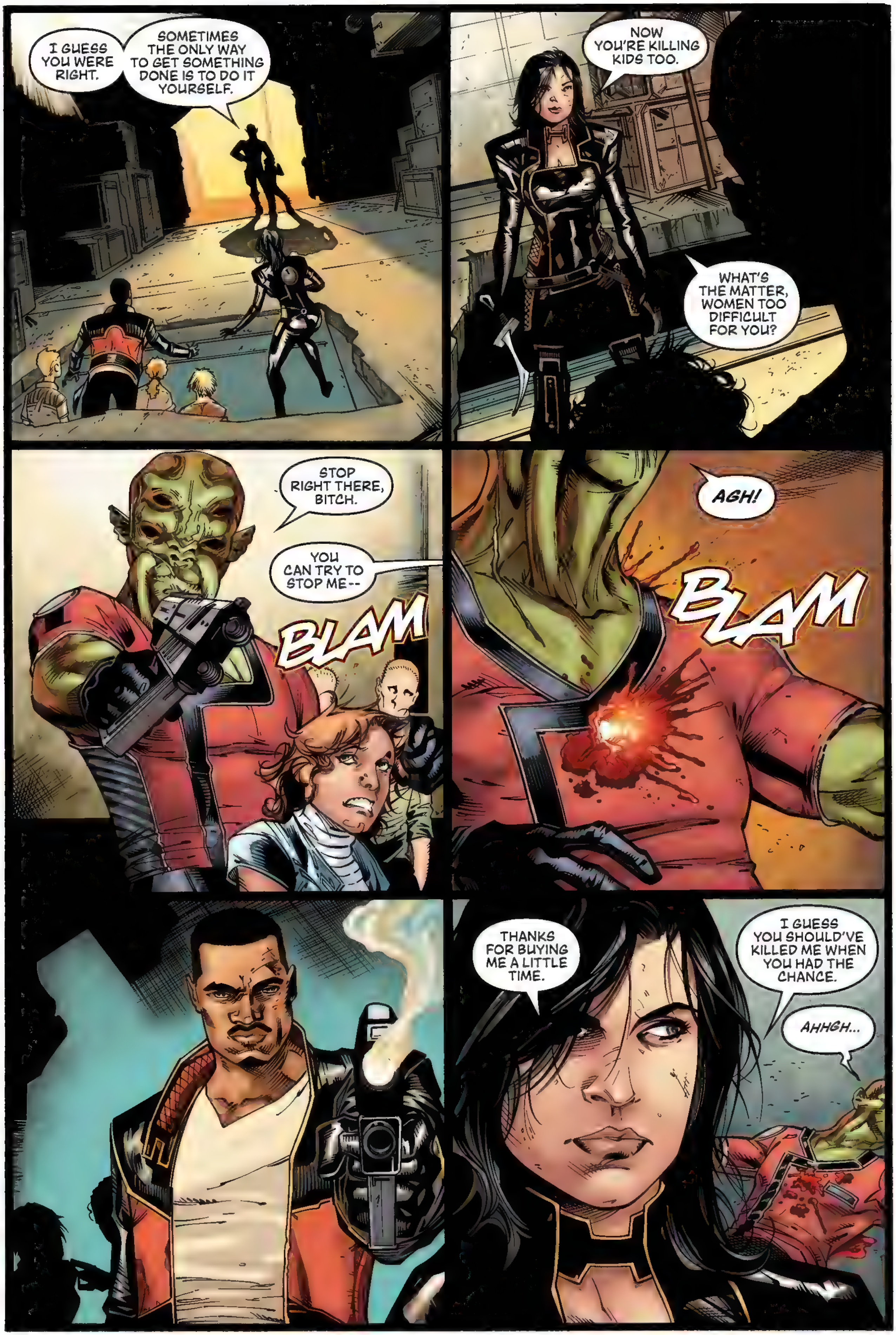
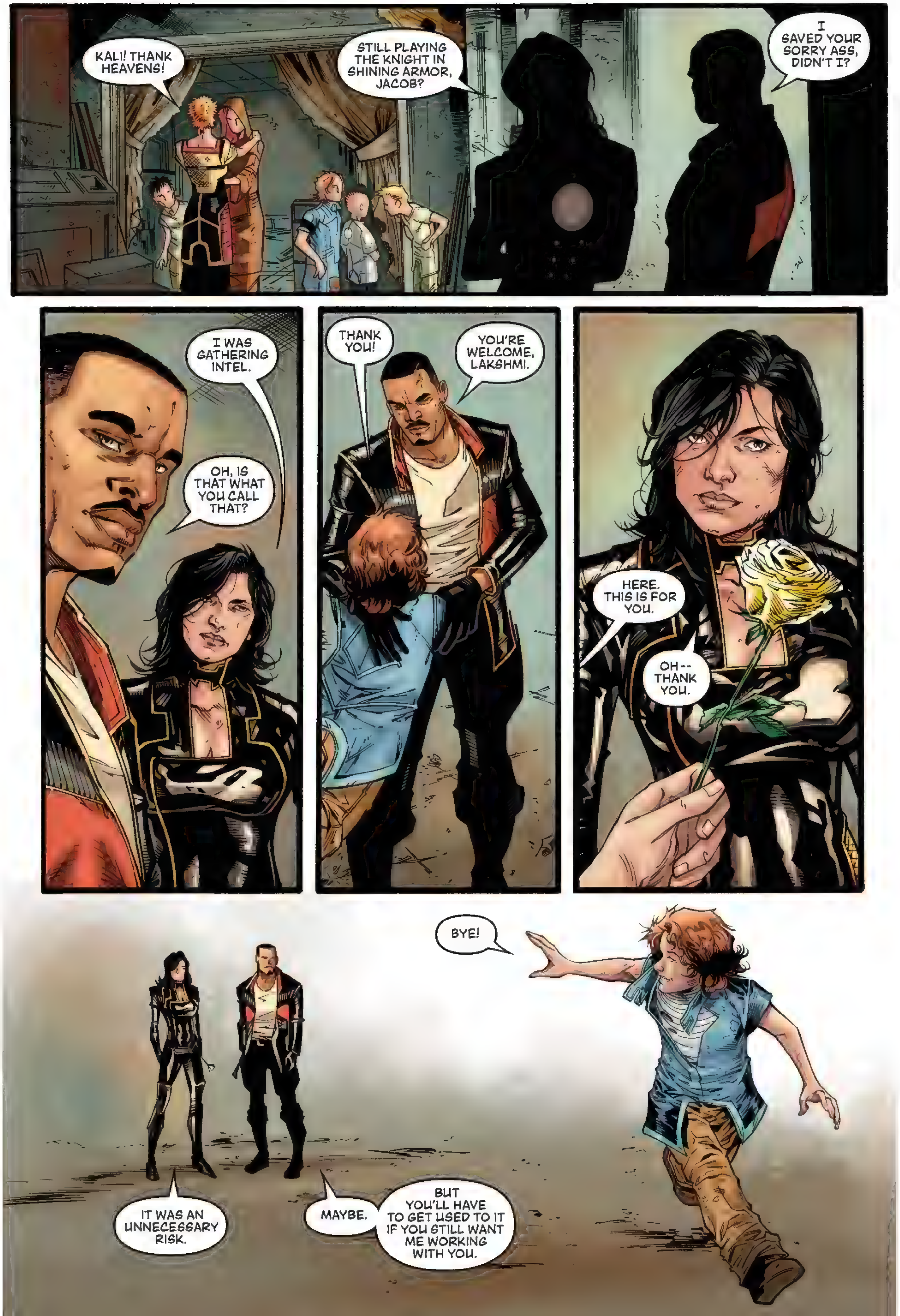
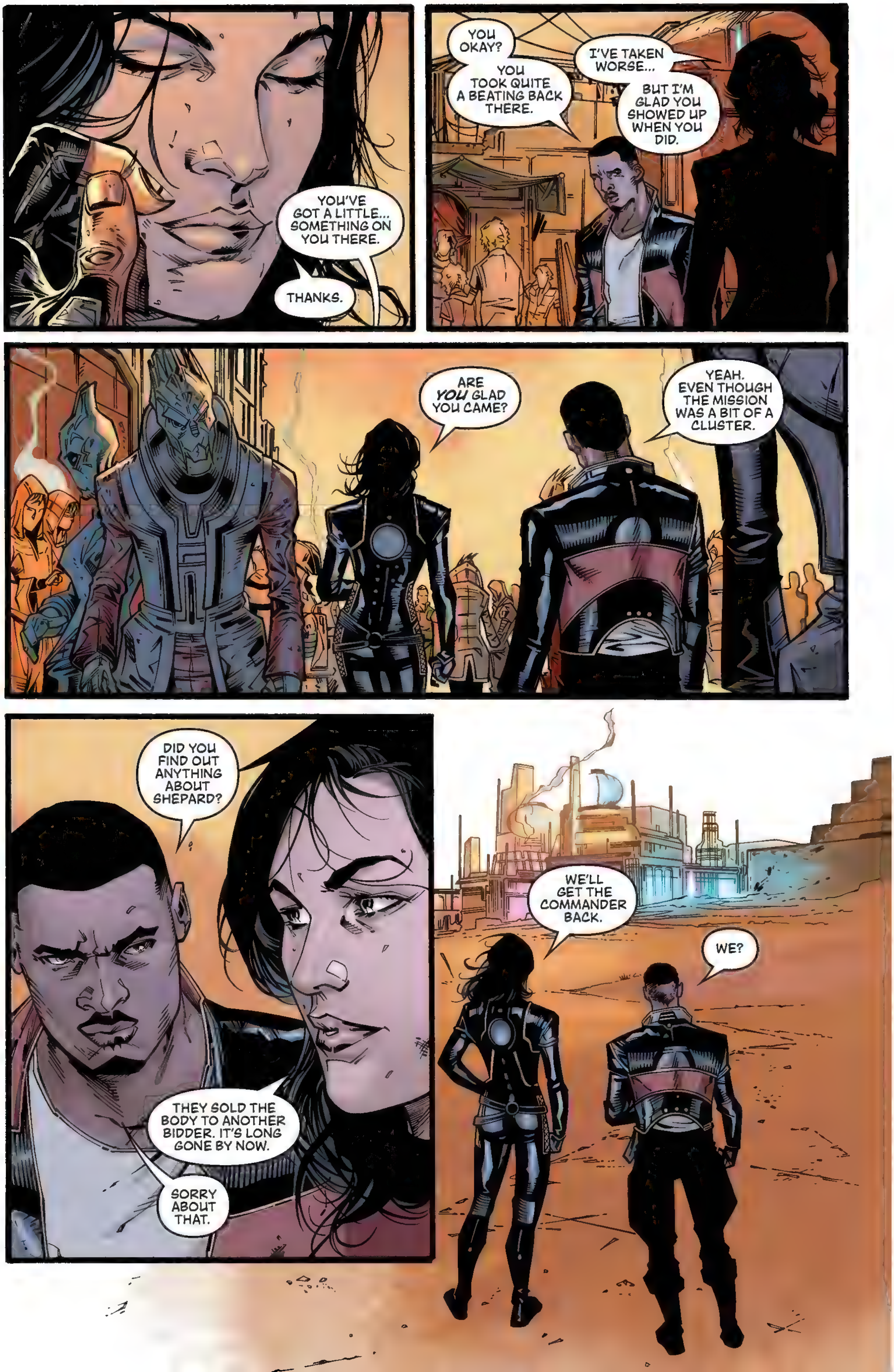

WAIT!
I NEED HIM ALIVE.

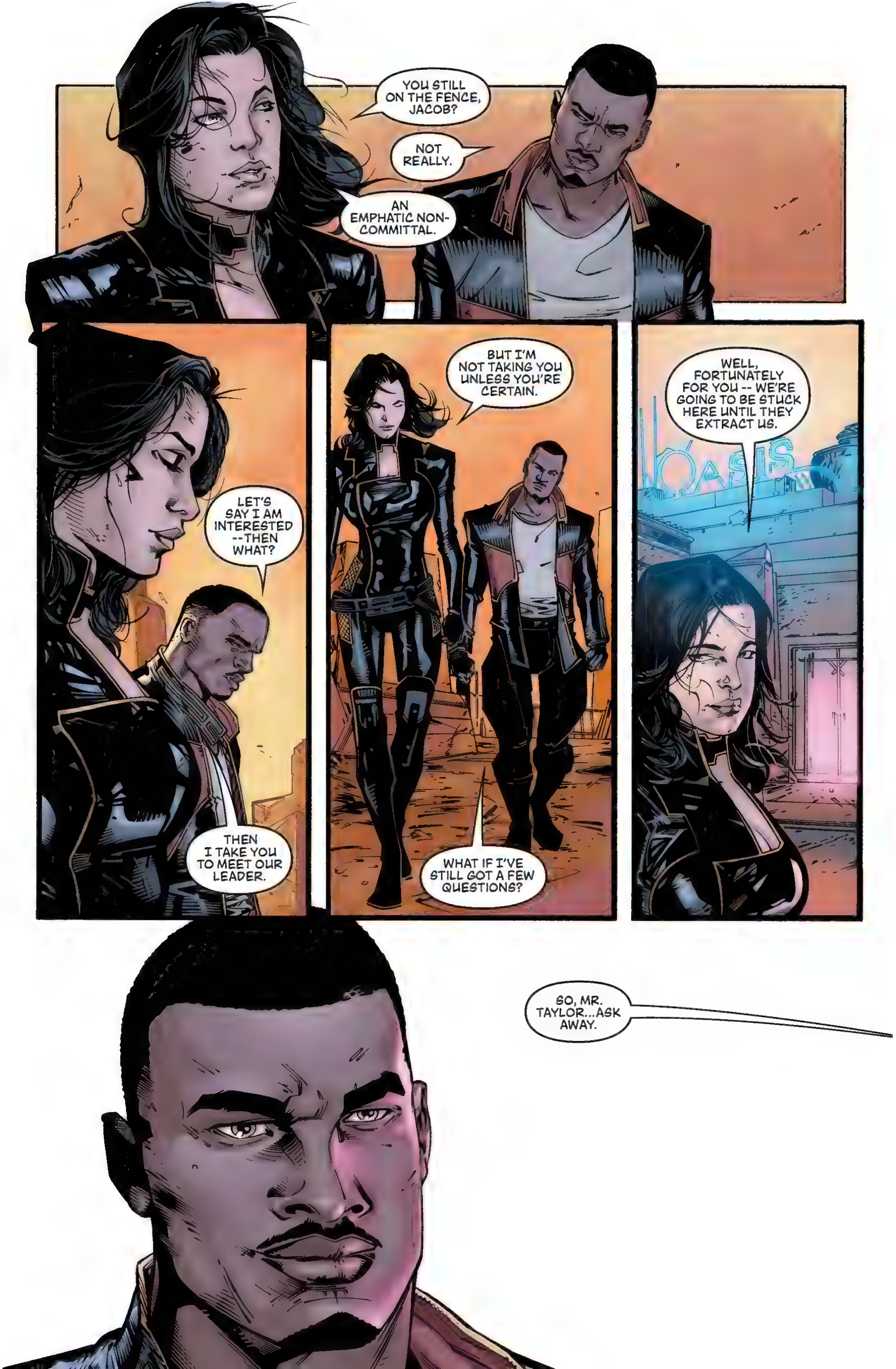

WHERE ARE THEY? YOUR WIFE AND KIDS?
TELL ME, OR I LET HER FINISH THIS!
THROUGH THERE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
FULFILLING A PROMISE.
C'MON.

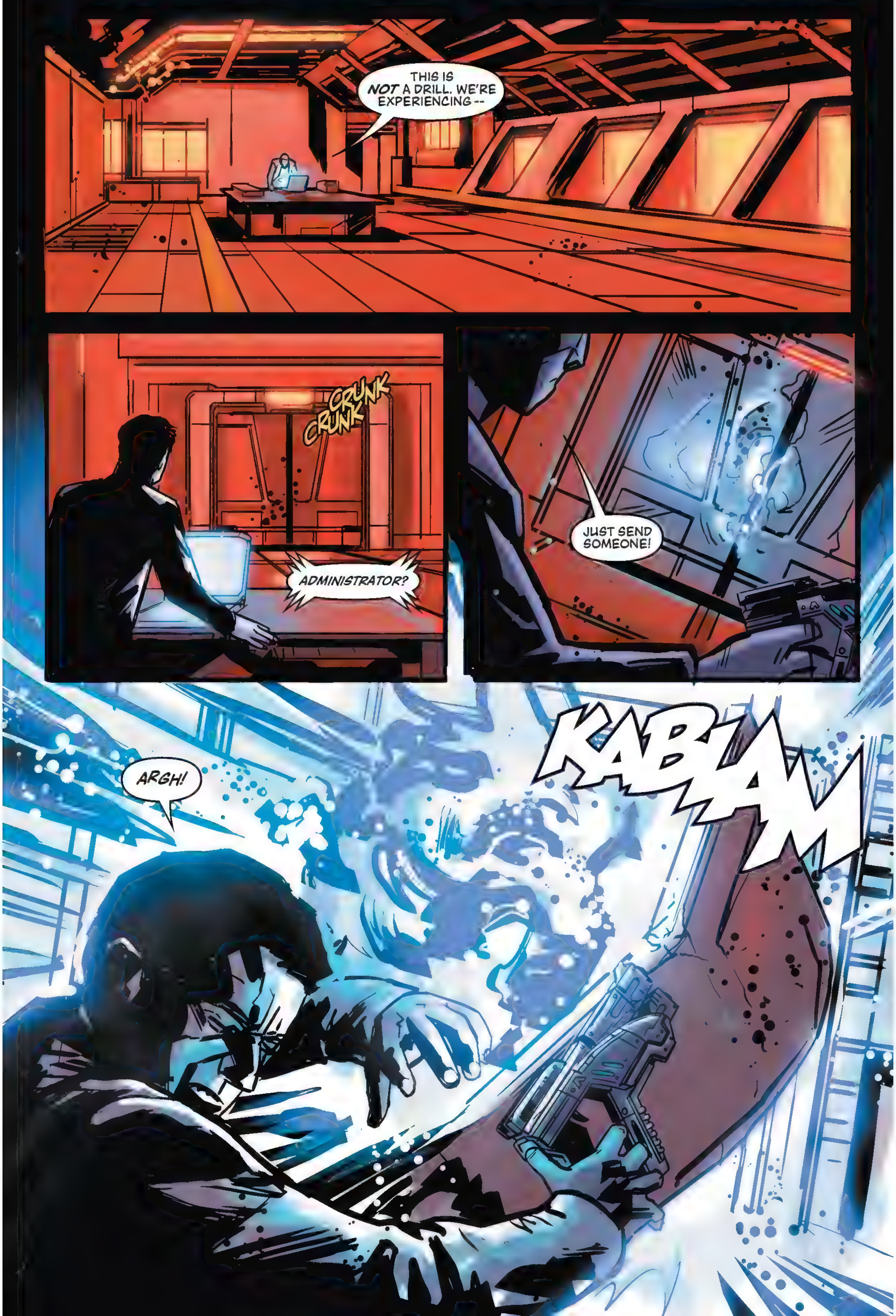

GOD...
IT'S OKAY. I'M HERE TO HELP.
YOU'RE FREE TO GO.
D17
HERE.
LET ME HELP YOU.
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.

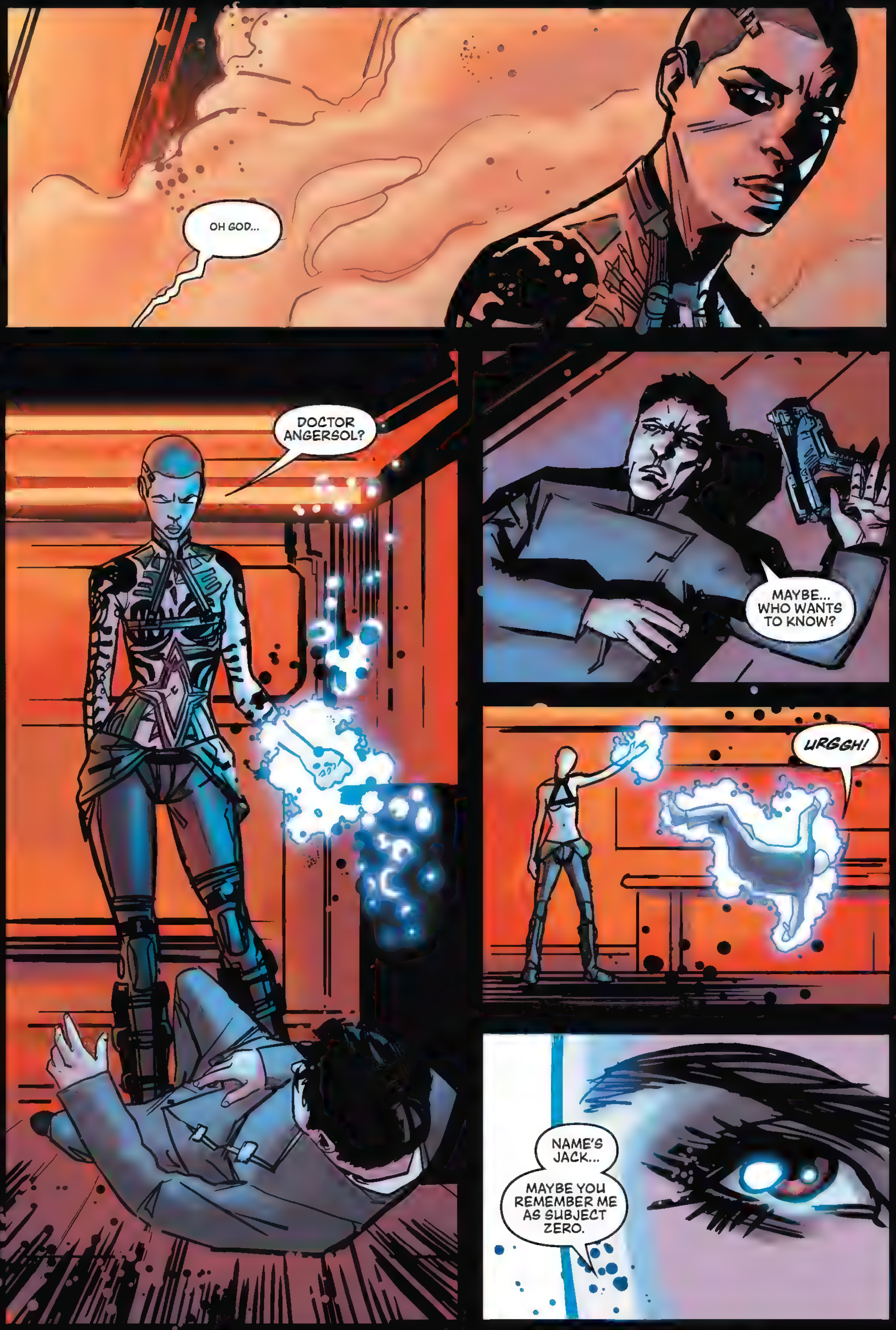

I GUESS YOU WERE RIGHT.
SOMETIMES THE ONLY WAY TO GET SOMETHING DONE IS TO DO IT YOURSELF.
NOW YOU'RE KILLING KIDS TOO.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, WOMEN TOO DIFFICULT FOR YOU?
STOP RIGHT THERE, BITCH.
YOU CAN TRY TO STOP ME--
BLAM
AGH!
BLAM
THANKS FOR BUYING ME A LITTLE TIME.
I GUESS YOU SHOULD'VE KILLED ME WHEN YOU HAD THE CHANCE.
AHHGH...

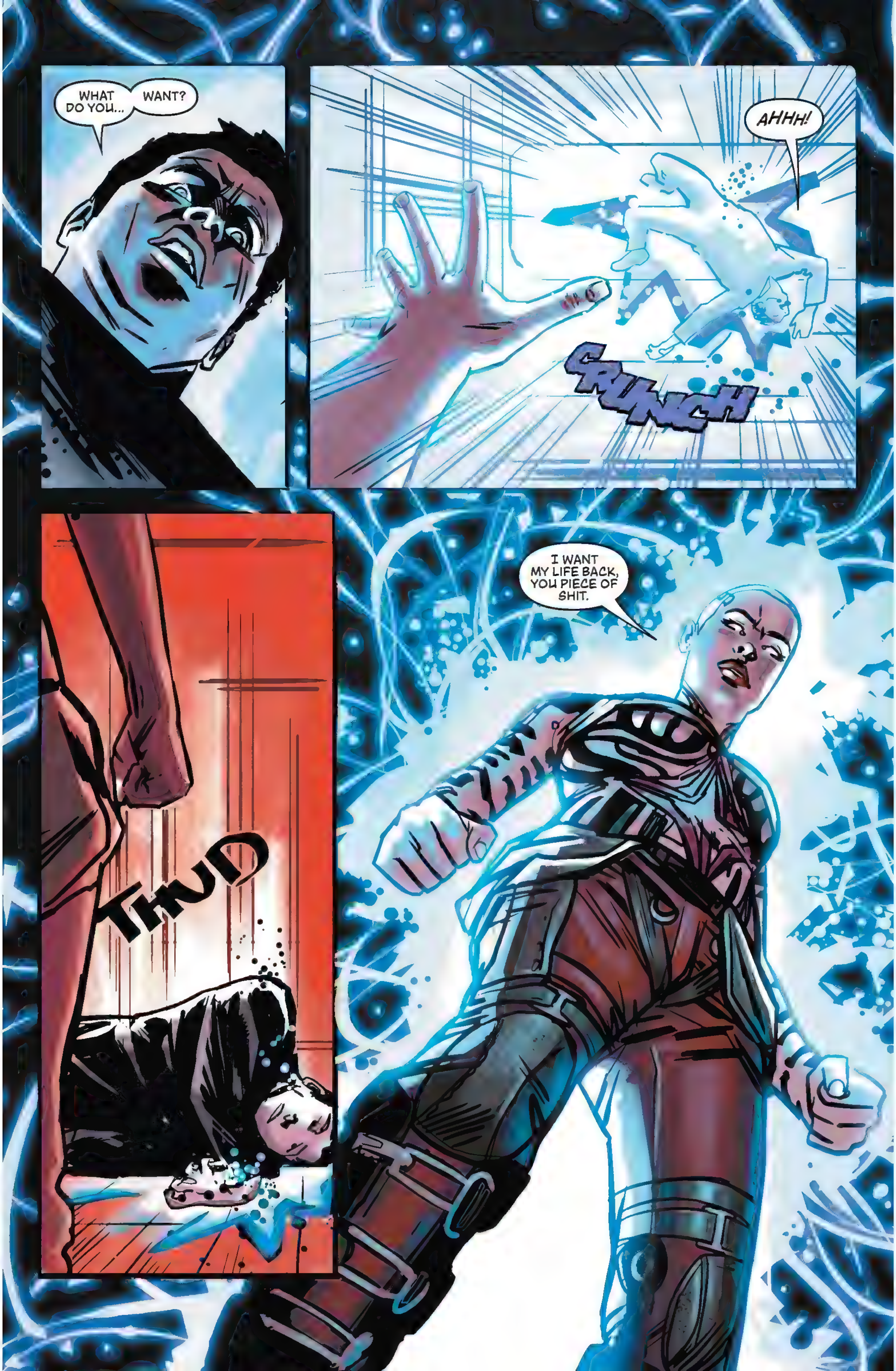

KALI! THANK HEAVENS!
STILL PLAYING THE KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR, JACOB?
I SAVED YOUR SORRY ASS, DIDN'T I?
I WAS GATHERING INTEL.
OH, IS THAT WHAT YOU CALL THAT?
THANK YOU!
YOU'RE WELCOME, LAKSHMI.
HERE. THIS IS FOR YOU.
OH-- THANK YOU.
BYE!
IT WAS AN UNNECESSARY RISK.
MAYBE.
BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO GET USED TO IT IF YOU STILL WANT ME WORKING WITH YOU.

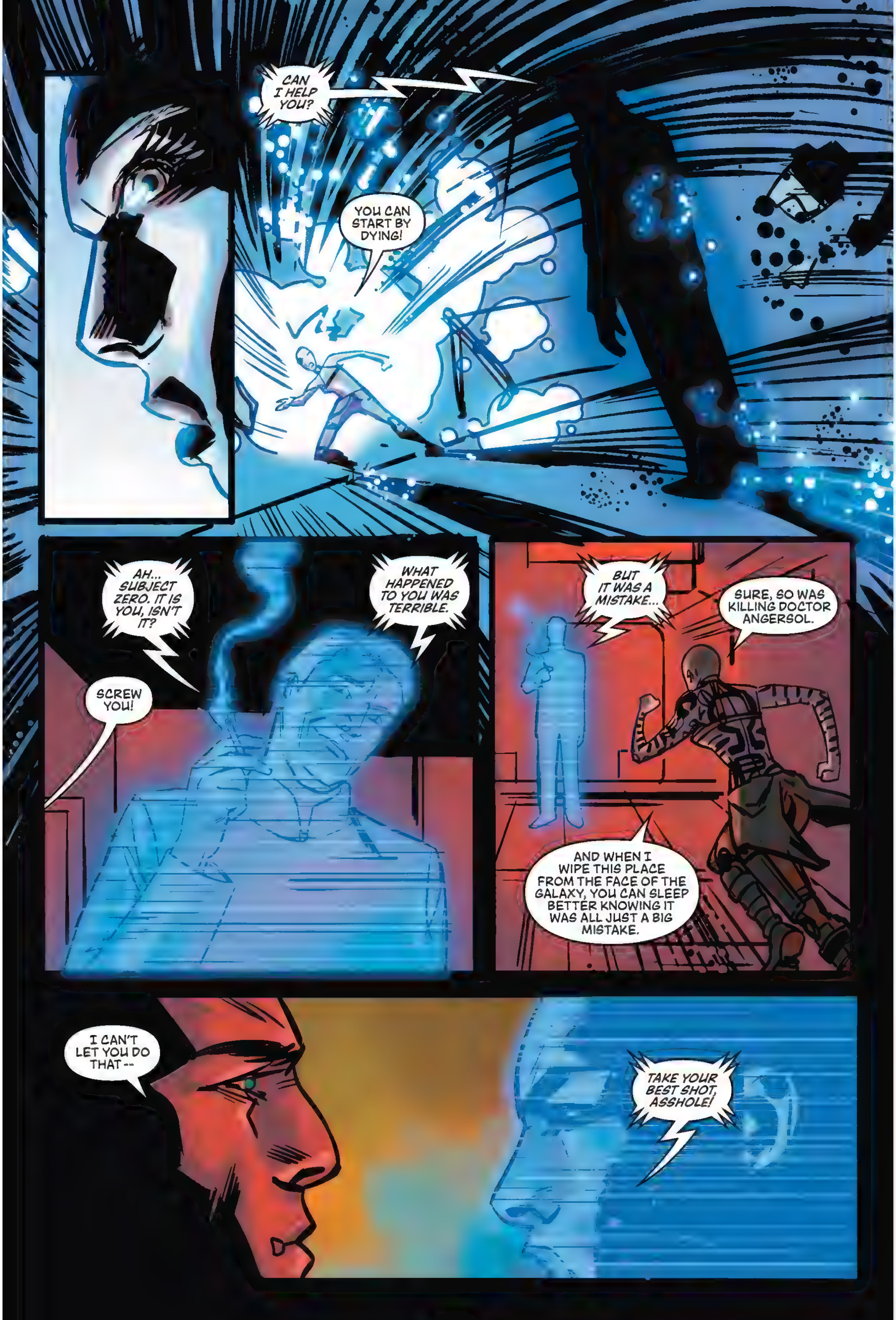

YOU'VE GOT A LITTLE... SOMETHING ON YOU THERE.
THANKS.
YOU OKAY?
YOU TOOK QUITE A BEATING BACK THERE.
I'VE TAKEN WORSE...
BUT I'M GLAD YOU SHOWED UP WHEN YOU DID.
ARE *YOU* GLAD YOU CAME?
YEAH. EVEN THOUGH THE MISSION WAS A BIT OF A CLUSTER.
DID YOU FIND OUT ANYTHING ABOUT SHEPARD?
THEY SOLD THE BODY TO ANOTHER BIDDER. IT'S LONG GONE BY NOW.
SORRY ABOUT THAT.
WE'LL GET THE COMMANDER BACK.
WE?

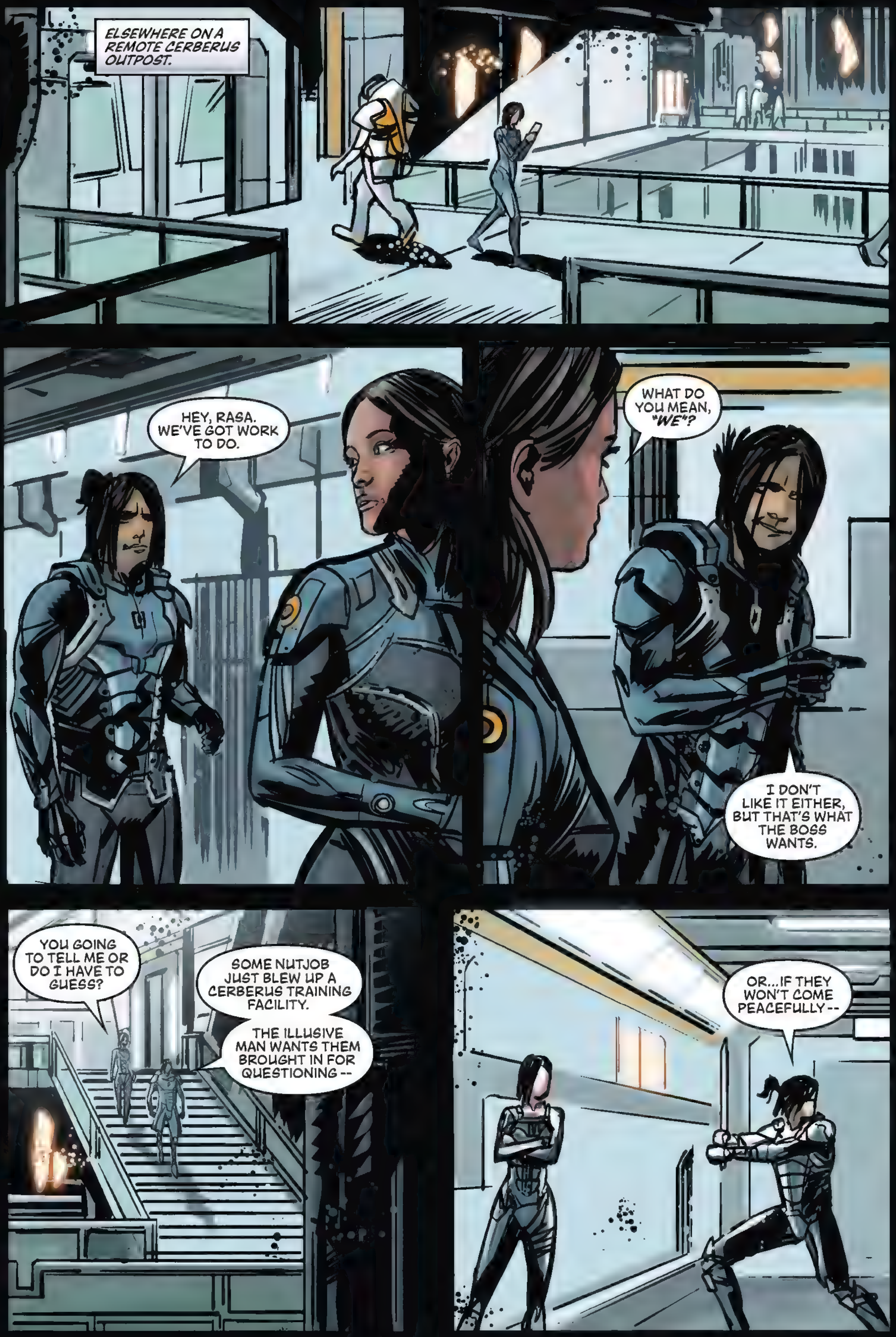

YOU STILL ON THE FENCE, JACOB?
NOT REALLY.
AN EMPHATIC NON-COMMITTAL.
LET'S SAY I AM INTERESTED --THEN WHAT?
THEN I TAKE YOU TO MEET OUR LEADER.
BUT I'M NOT TAKING YOU UNLESS YOU'RE CERTAIN.
WHAT IF I'VE STILL GOT A FEW QUESTIONS?
WELL, FORTUNATELY FOR YOU -- WE'RE GOING TO BE STUCK HERE UNTIL THEY EXTRACT US.
OASIS
SO, MR. TAYLOR...ASK AWAY.

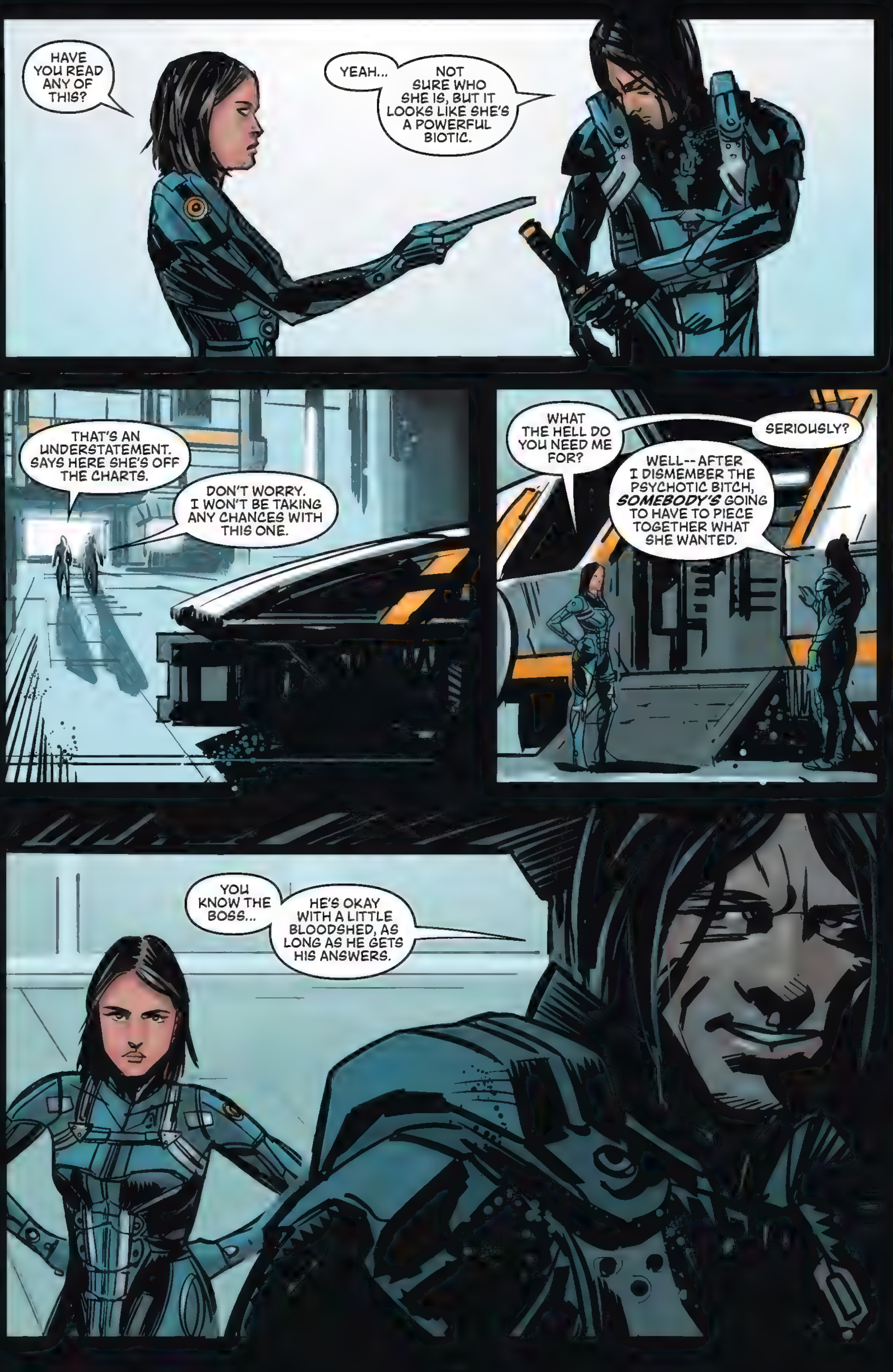

THIS IS *NOT* A DRILL. WE'RE EXPERIENCING --
CRUNK CRUNK
ADMINISTRATOR?
JUST SEND SOMEONE!
KABLAM
ARGH!

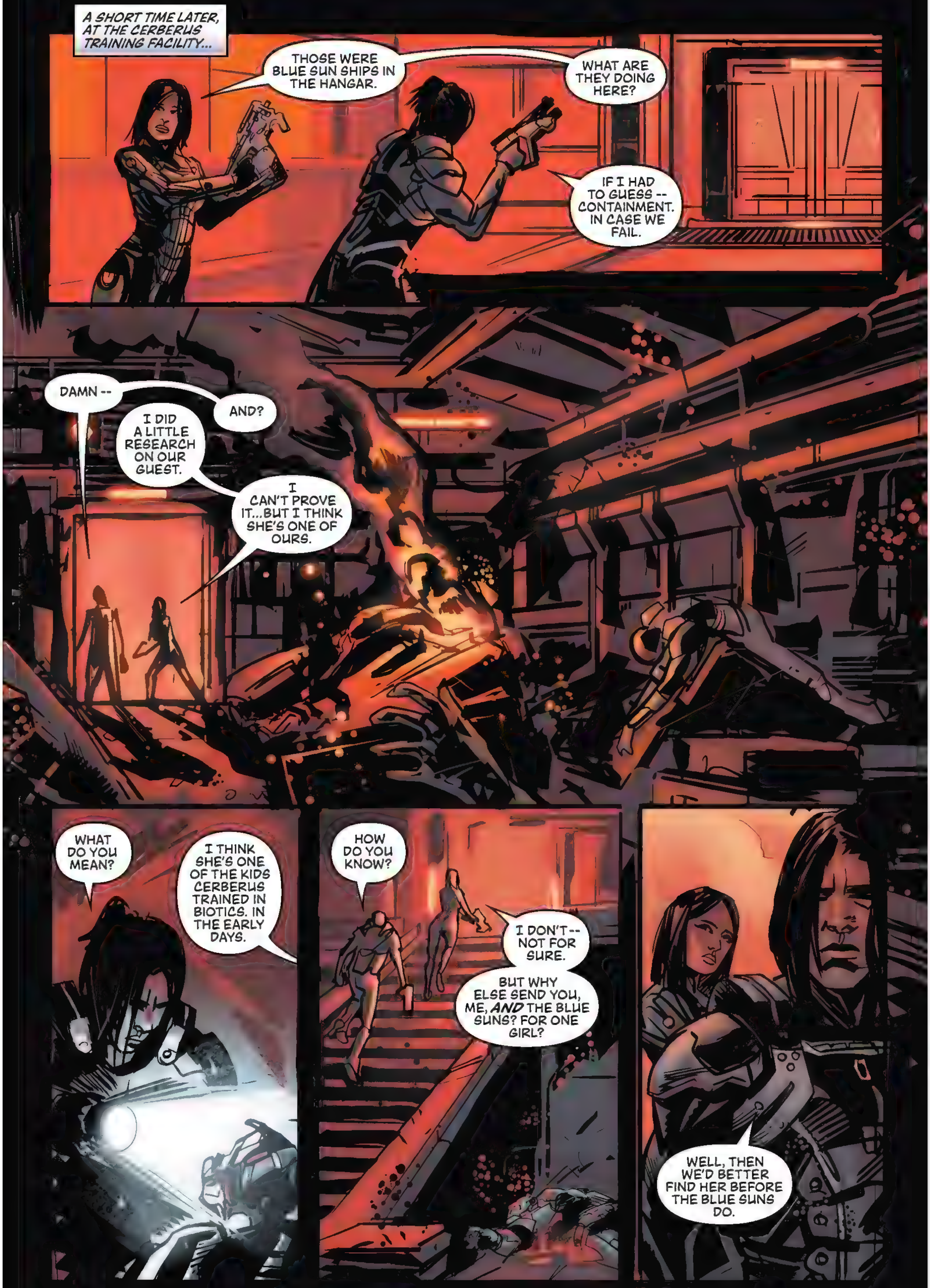

OH GOD...
DOCTOR ANGERSOL?
MAYBE... WHO WANTS TO KNOW?
URGGH!
NAME'S JACK...
MAYBE YOU REMEMBER ME AS SUBJECT ZERO.

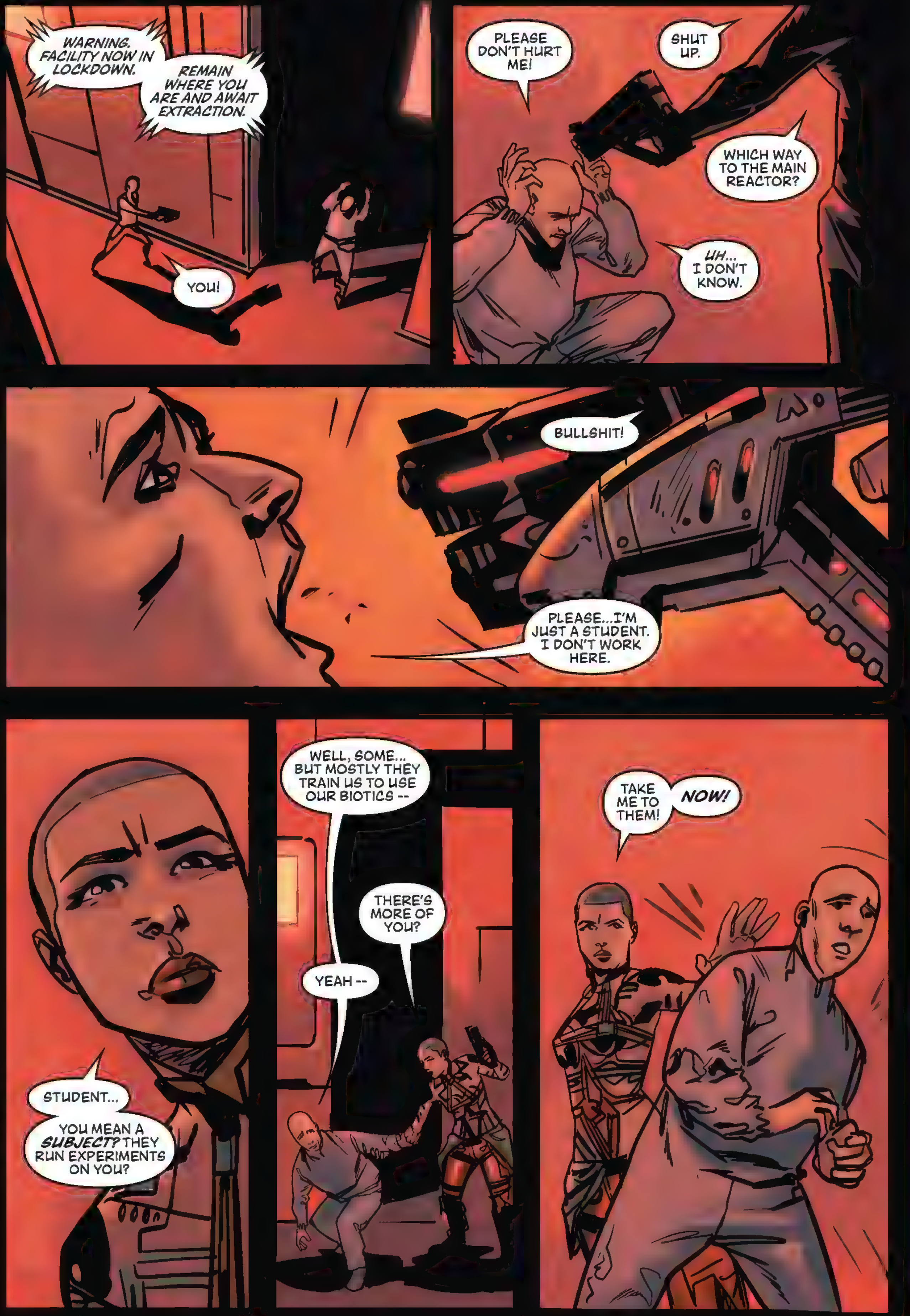

WHAT DO YOU...
WANT?
AHHH!
CRUNCH
THUD
I WANT MY LIFE BACK, YOU PIECE OF SHIT.

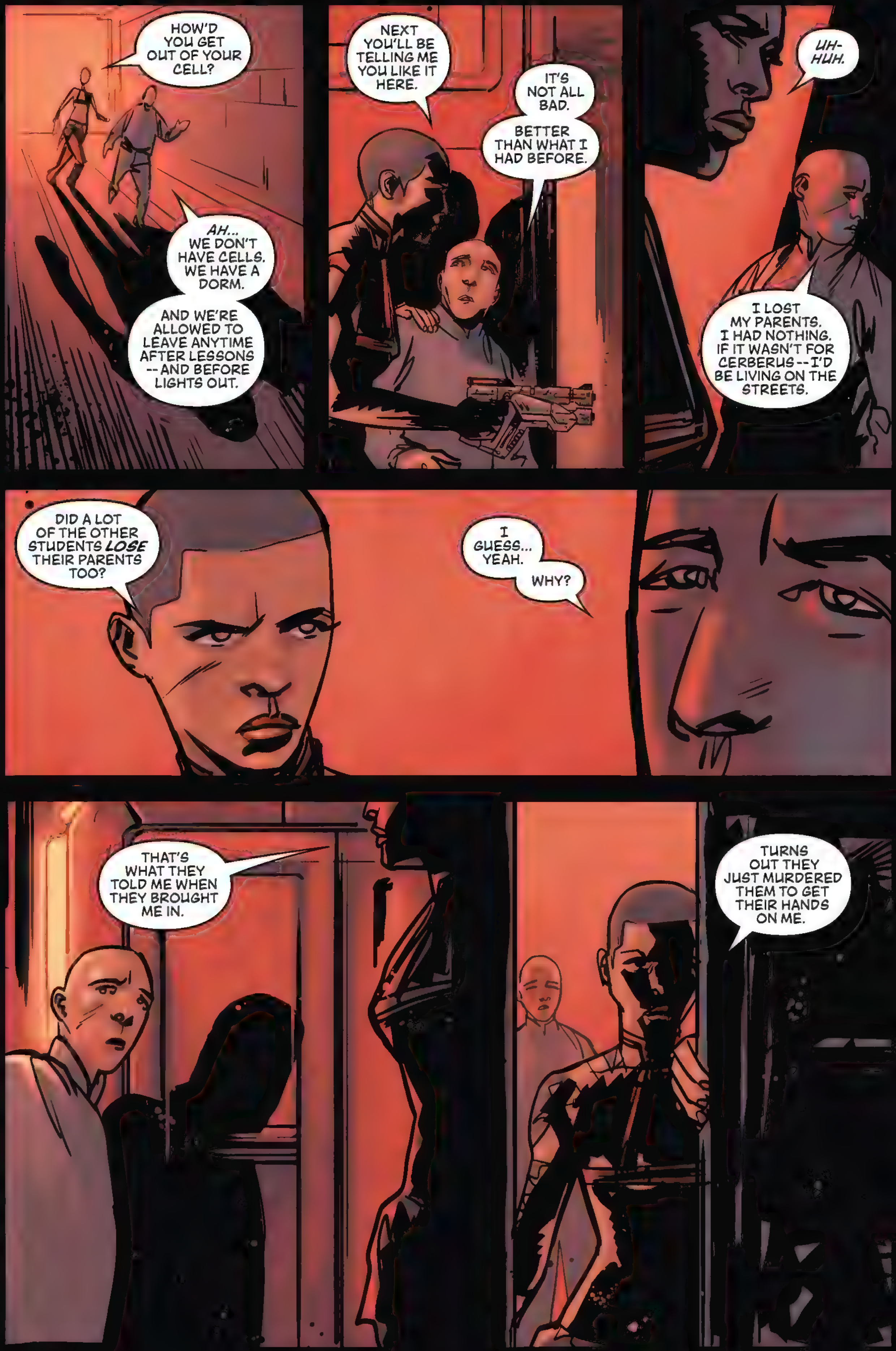

CAN I HELP YOU?
YOU CAN START BY DYING!
AH... SUBJECT ZERO. IT IS YOU, ISN'T IT?
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU WAS TERRIBLE.
SCREW YOU!
BUT IT WAS A MISTAKE...
SURE, SO WAS KILLING DOCTOR ANGERSOL.
AND WHEN I WIPE THIS PLACE FROM THE FACE OF THE GALAXY, YOU CAN SLEEP BETTER KNOWING IT WAS ALL JUST A BIG MISTAKE.
I CAN'T LET YOU DO THAT --
TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT, ASSHOLE!

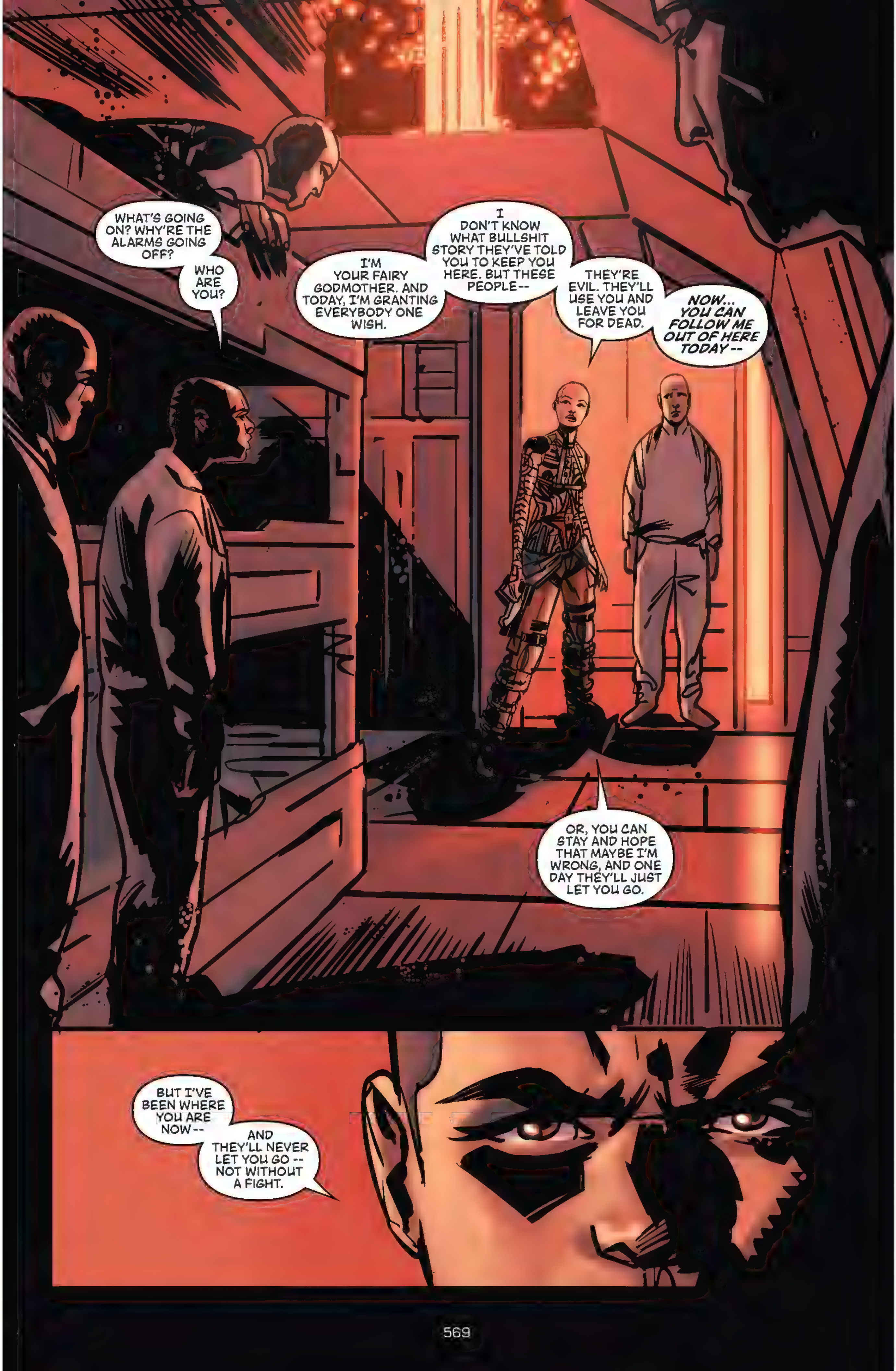

ELSEWHERE ON A REMOTE CERBERUS OUTPOST.
HEY, RASA. WE'VE GOT WORK TO DO.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "WE"?
I DON'T LIKE IT EITHER, BUT THAT'S WHAT THE BOSS WANTS.
YOU GOING TO TELL ME OR DO I HAVE TO GUESS?
SOME NUTJOB JUST BLEW UP A CERBERUS TRAINING FACILITY.
THE ILLUSIVE MAN WANTS THEM BROUGHT IN FOR QUESTIONING --
OR...IF THEY WON'T COME PEACEFULLY --

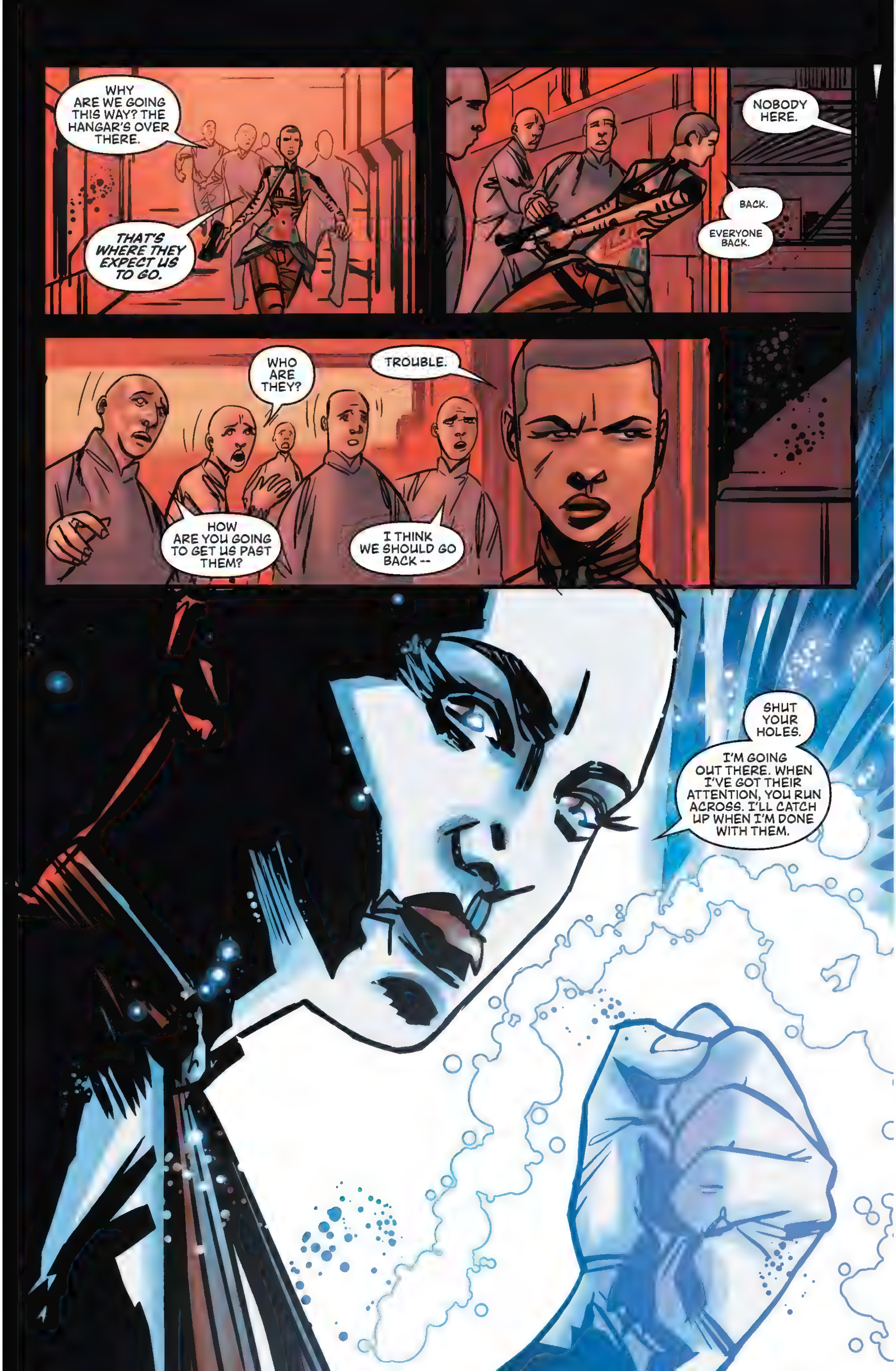

HAVE YOU READ ANY OF THIS?
YEAH...
NOT SURE WHO SHE IS, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE SHE'S A POWERFUL BIOTIC.
THAT'S AN UNDERSTATEMENT. SAYS HERE SHE'S OFF THE CHARTS.
DON'T WORRY. I WON'T BE TAKING ANY CHANCES WITH THIS ONE.
WHAT THE HELL DO YOU NEED ME FOR?
SERIOUSLY?
WELL--AFTER I DISMEMBER THE PSYCHOTIC BITCH, *SOMEBODY'S* GOING TO HAVE TO PIECE TOGETHER WHAT SHE WANTED.
YOU KNOW THE BOSS...
HE'S OKAY WITH A LITTLE BLOODSHED, AS LONG AS HE GETS HIS ANSWERS.

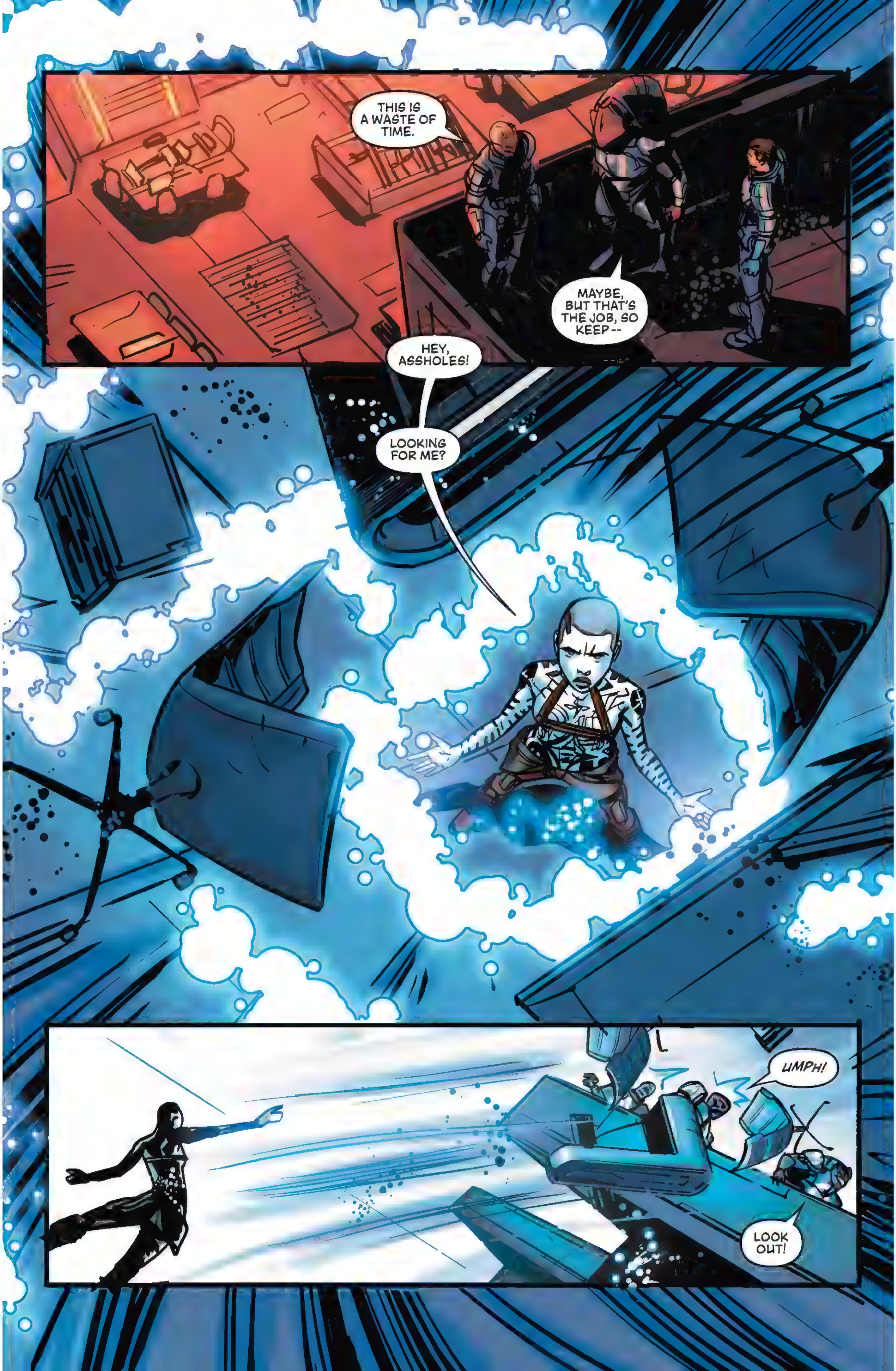

A SHORT TIME LATER, AT THE CERBERUS TRAINING FACILITY...
THOSE WERE BLUE SUN SHIPS IN THE HANGAR.
WHAT ARE THEY DOING HERE?
IF I HAD TO GUESS -- CONTAINMENT. IN CASE WE FAIL.
DAMN --
AND?
I DID A LITTLE RESEARCH ON OUR GUEST.
I CAN'T PROVE IT...BUT I THINK SHE'S ONE OF OURS.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I THINK SHE'S ONE OF THE KIDS CERBERUS TRAINED IN BIOTICS. IN THE EARLY DAYS.
HOW DO YOU KNOW?
I DON'T -- NOT FOR SURE.
BUT WHY ELSE SEND YOU, ME, *AND* THE BLUE SUNS? FOR ONE GIRL?
WELL, THEN WE'D BETTER FIND HER BEFORE THE BLUE SUNS DO.

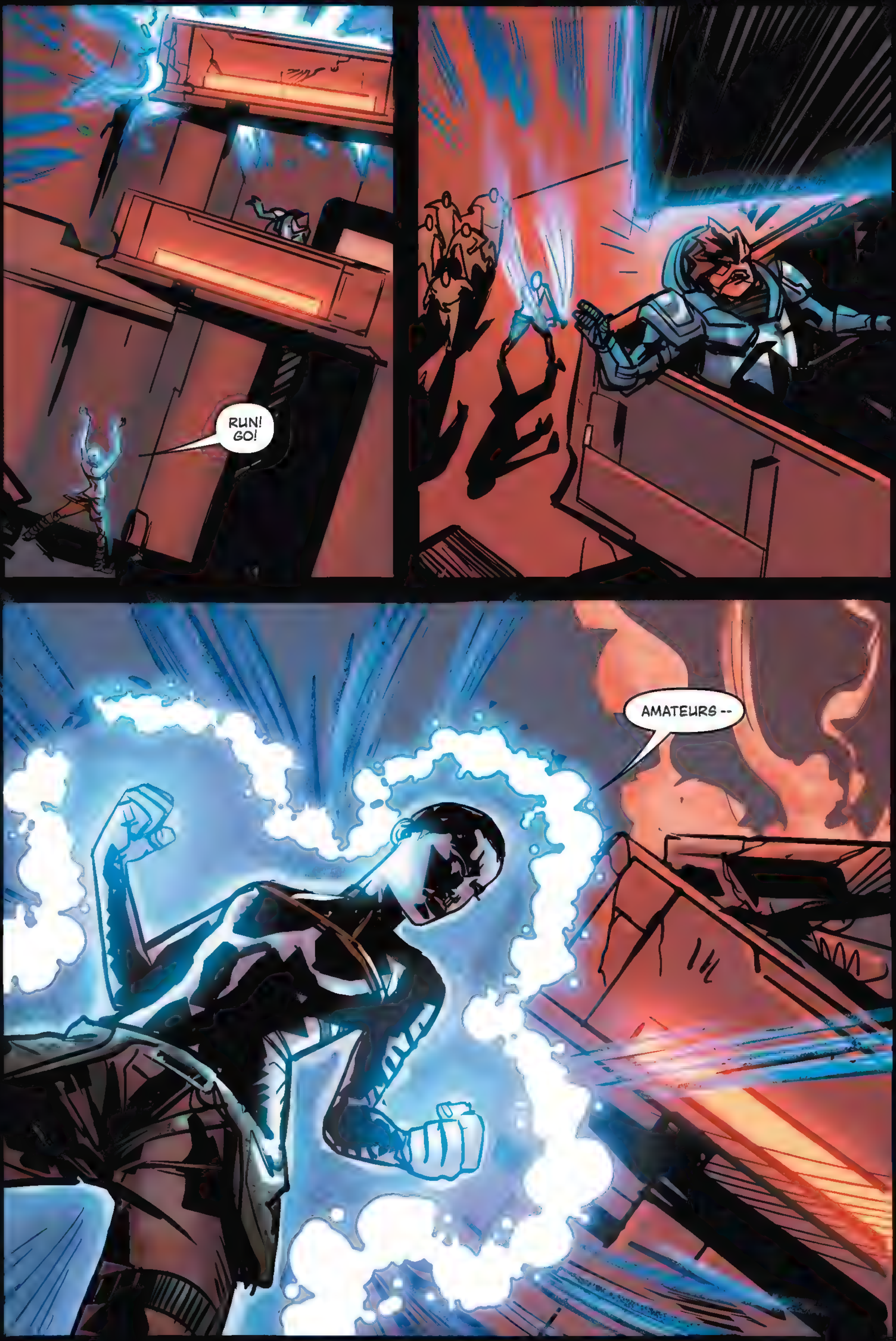

WARNING. FACILITY NOW IN LOCKDOWN.
REMAIN WHERE YOU ARE AND AWAIT EXTRACTION.
YOU!
PLEASE DON'T HURT ME!
SHUT UP.
WHICH WAY TO THE MAIN REACTOR?
UH... I DON'T KNOW.
BULLSHIT!
PLEASE...I'M JUST A STUDENT. I DON'T WORK HERE.
STUDENT...
YOU MEAN A *SUBJECT?* THEY RUN EXPERIMENTS ON YOU?
WELL, SOME... BUT MOSTLY THEY TRAIN US TO USE OUR BIOTICS --
THERE'S MORE OF YOU?
YEAH --
TAKE ME TO THEM!
NOW!

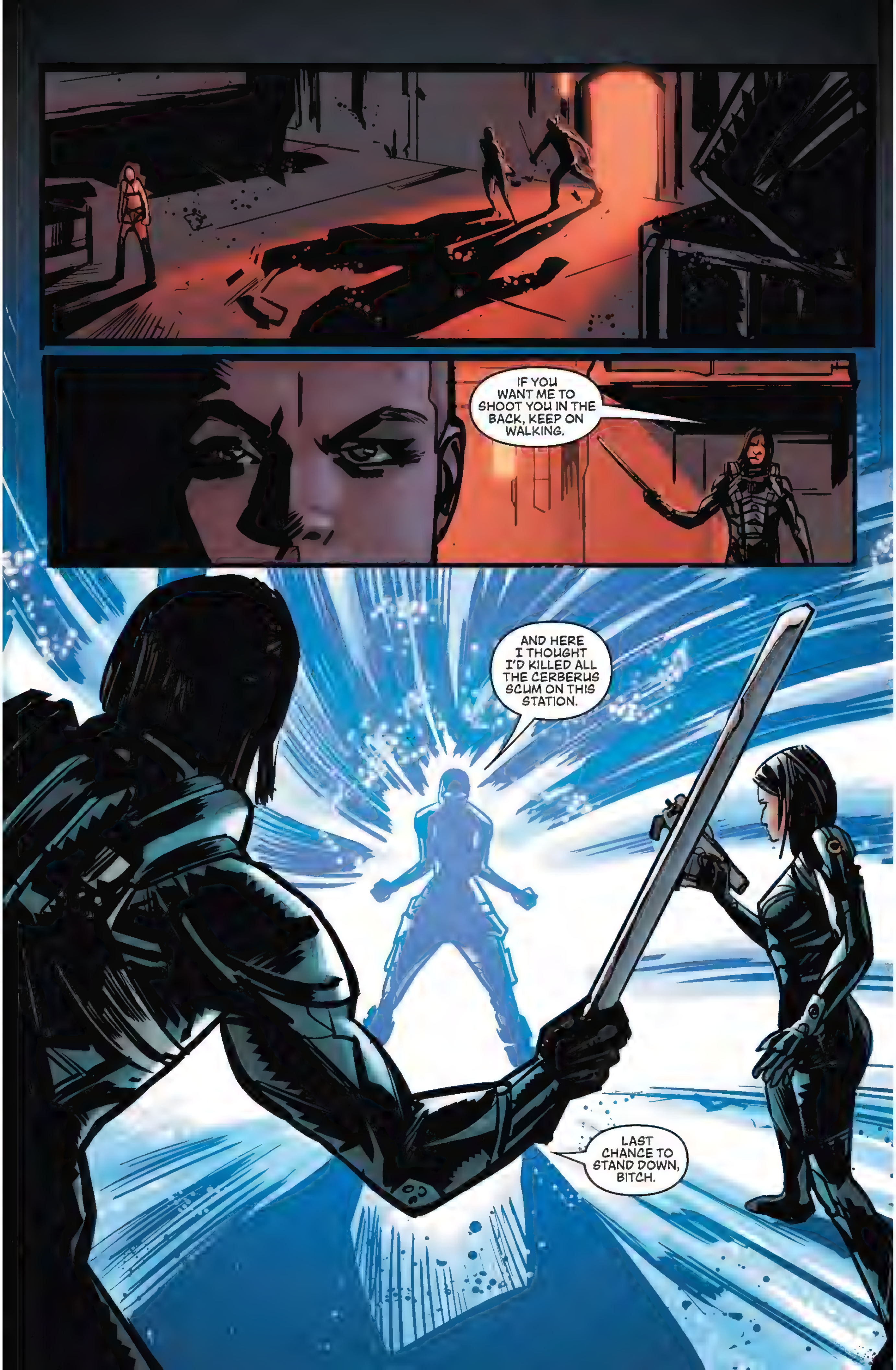

HOW'D YOU GET OUT OF YOUR CELL?
AH... WE DON'T HAVE CELLS. WE HAVE A DORM.
AND WE'RE ALLOWED TO LEAVE ANYTIME AFTER LESSONS --AND BEFORE LIGHTS OUT.
NEXT YOU'LL BE TELLING ME YOU LIKE IT HERE.
IT'S NOT ALL BAD.
BETTER THAN WHAT I HAD BEFORE.
UH-HUH.
I LOST MY PARENTS. I HAD NOTHING. IF IT WASN'T FOR CERBERUS--I'D BE LIVING ON THE STREETS.
DID A LOT OF THE OTHER STUDENTS *LOSE* THEIR PARENTS TOO?
I GUESS... YEAH.
WHY?
THAT'S WHAT THEY TOLD ME WHEN THEY BROUGHT ME IN.
TURNS OUT THEY JUST MURDERED THEM TO GET THEIR HANDS ON ME.

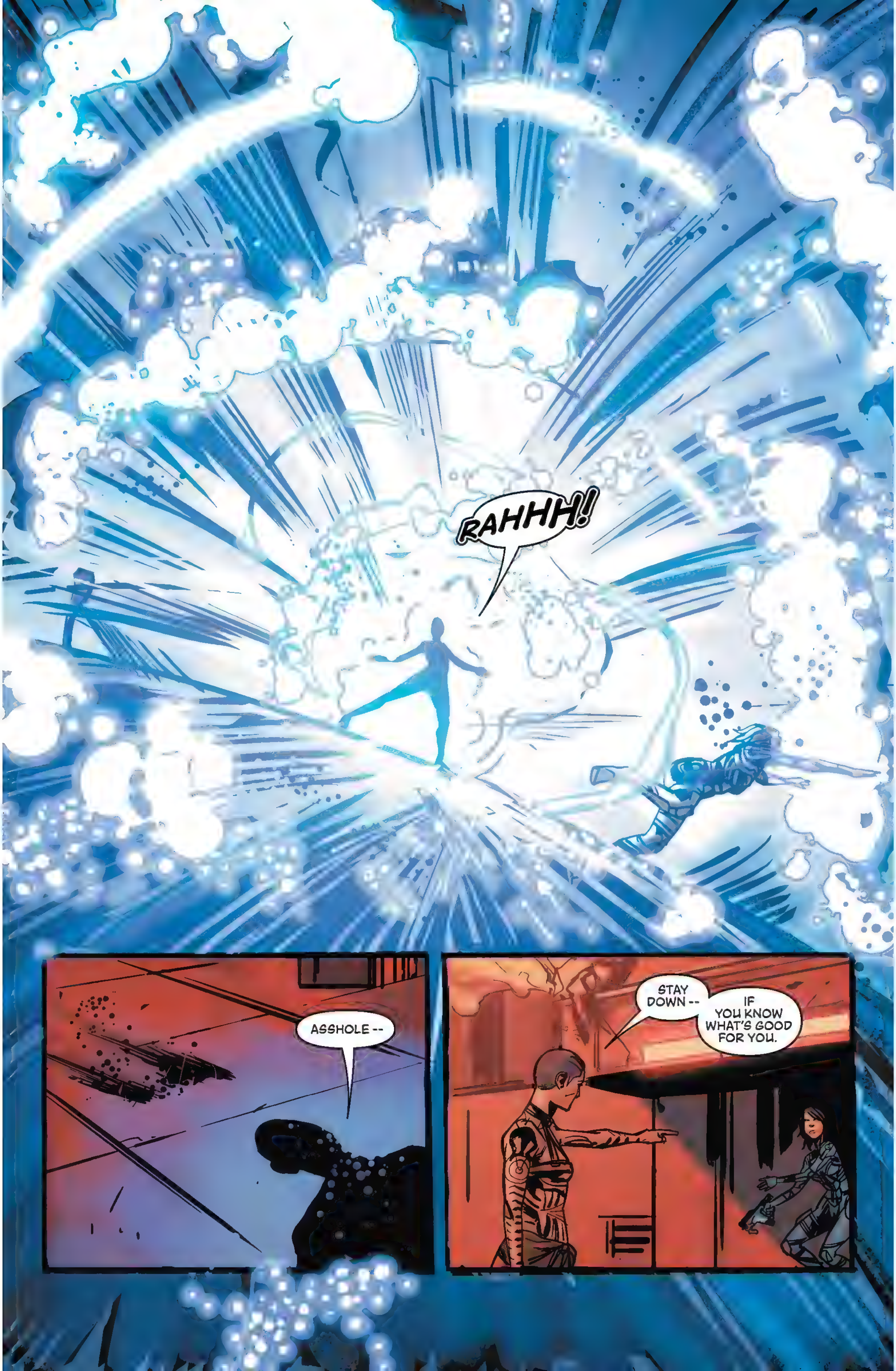

WHAT'S GOING ON? WHY'RE THE ALARMS GOING OFF?
WHO ARE YOU?
I'M YOUR FAIRY GODMOTHER. AND TODAY, I'M GRANTING EVERYBODY ONE WISH.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT BULLSHIT STORY THEY'VE TOLD YOU TO KEEP YOU HERE. BUT THESE PEOPLE--
THEY'RE EVIL. THEY'LL USE YOU AND LEAVE YOU FOR DEAD.
NOW... YOU CAN FOLLOW ME OUT OF HERE TODAY--
OR, YOU CAN STAY AND HOPE THAT MAYBE I'M WRONG, AND ONE DAY THEY'LL JUST LET YOU GO.
BUT I'VE BEEN WHERE YOU ARE NOW--
AND THEY'LL NEVER LET YOU GO-- NOT WITHOUT A FIGHT.

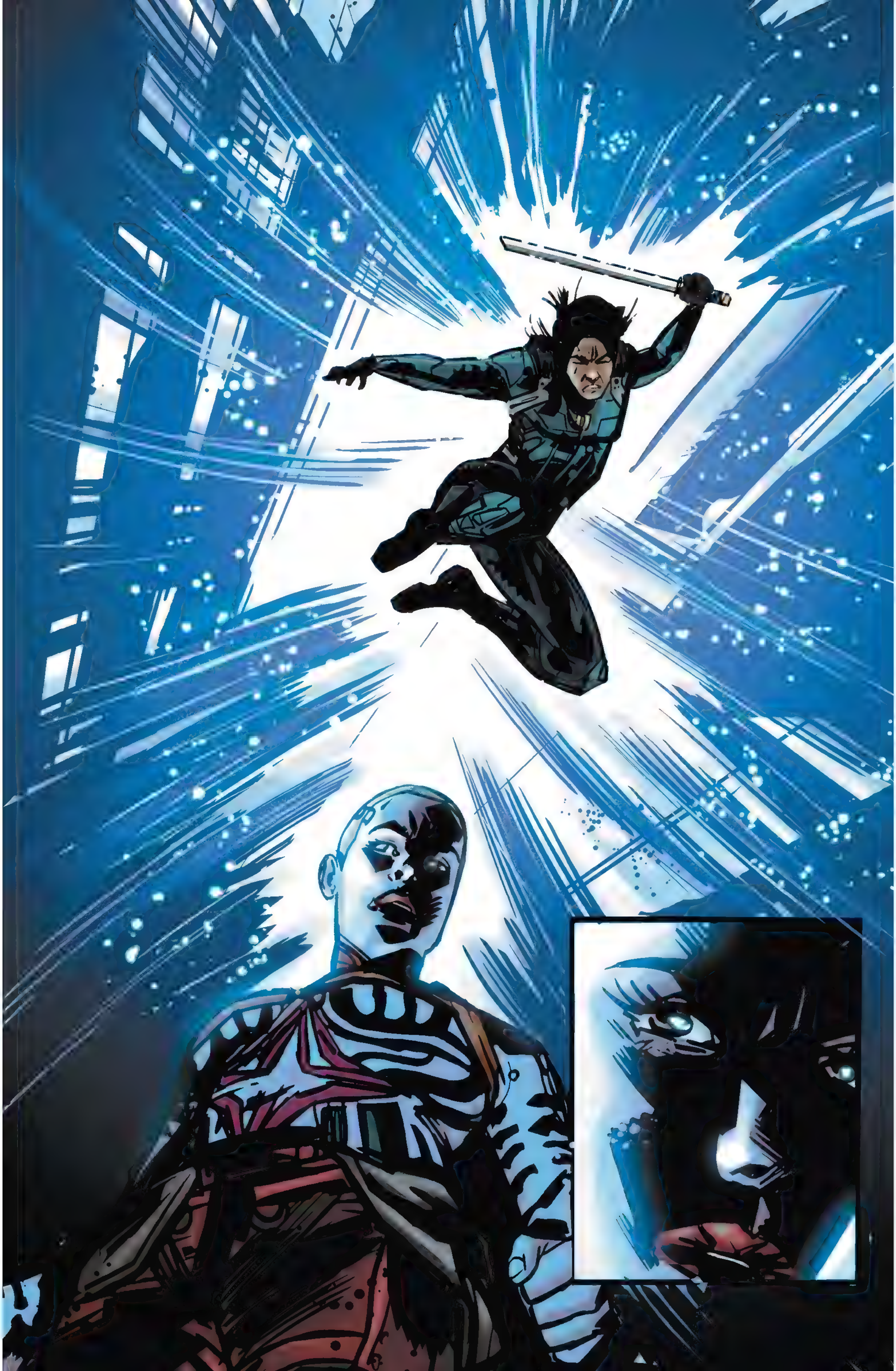

WHY ARE WE GOING THIS WAY? THE HANGAR'S OVER THERE.
THAT'S WHERE THEY EXPECT US TO GO.
NOBODY HERE.
BACK.
EVERYONE BACK.
WHO ARE THEY?
TROUBLE.
HOW ARE YOU GOING TO GET US PAST THEM?
I THINK WE SHOULD GO BACK --
SHUT YOUR HOLES.
I'M GOING OUT THERE. WHEN I'VE GOT THEIR ATTENTION, YOU RUN ACROSS. I'LL CATCH UP WHEN I'M DONE WITH THEM.

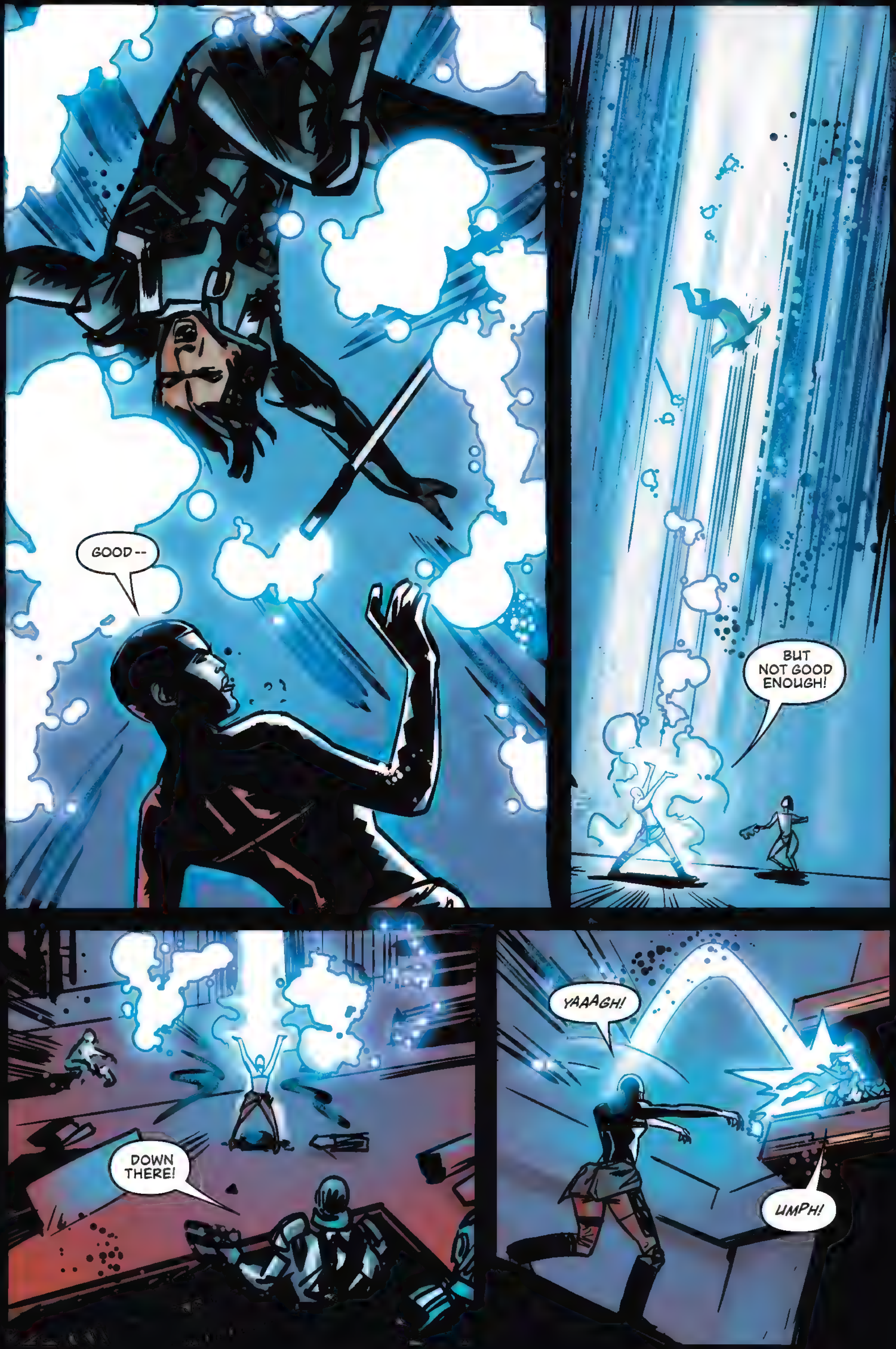

THIS IS A WASTE OF TIME.
MAYBE, BUT THAT'S THE JOB, SO KEEP--
HEY, ASSHOLES!
LOOKING FOR ME?
UMPH!
LOOK OUT!

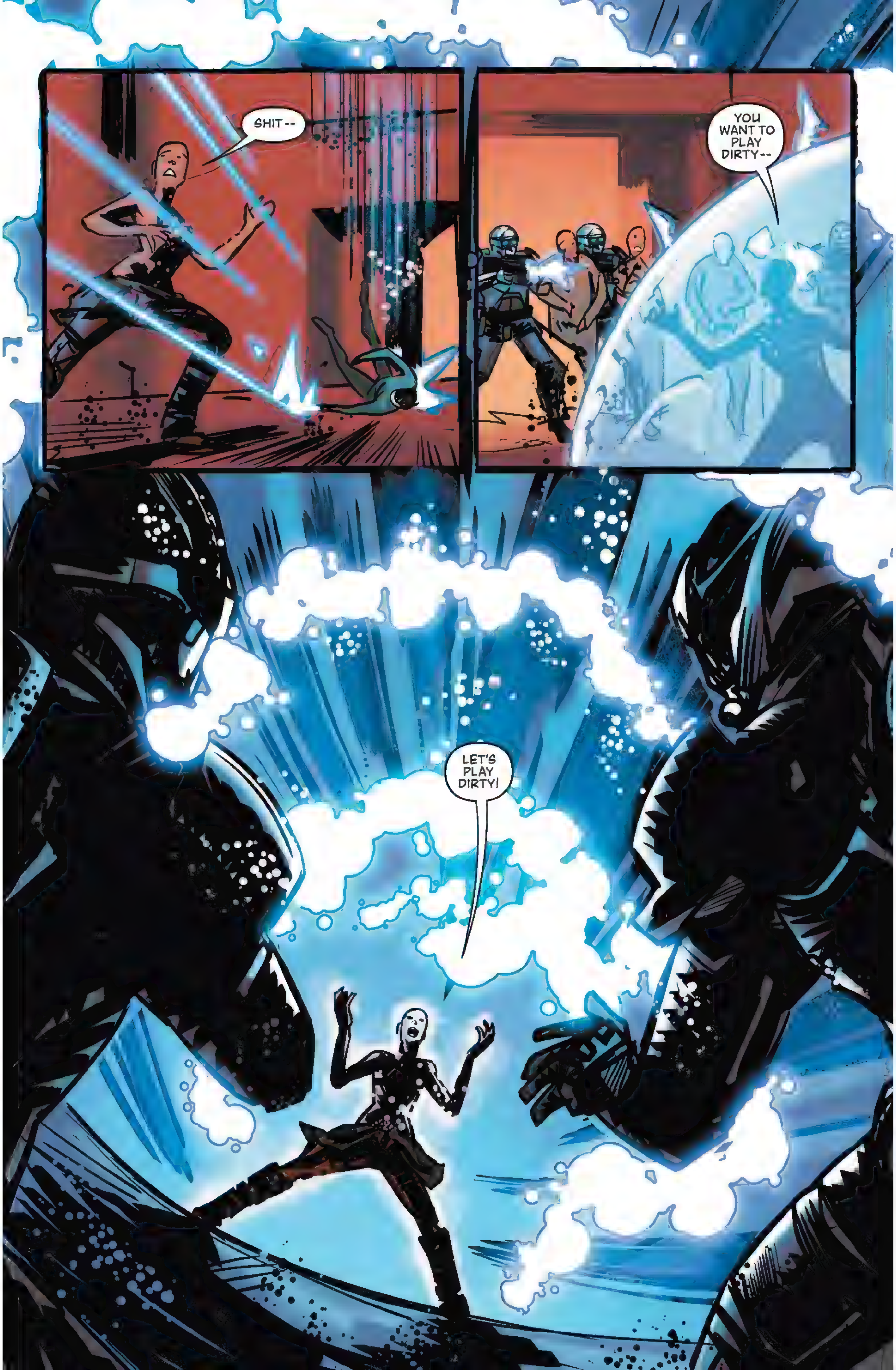

RUN! GO!
AMATEURS --

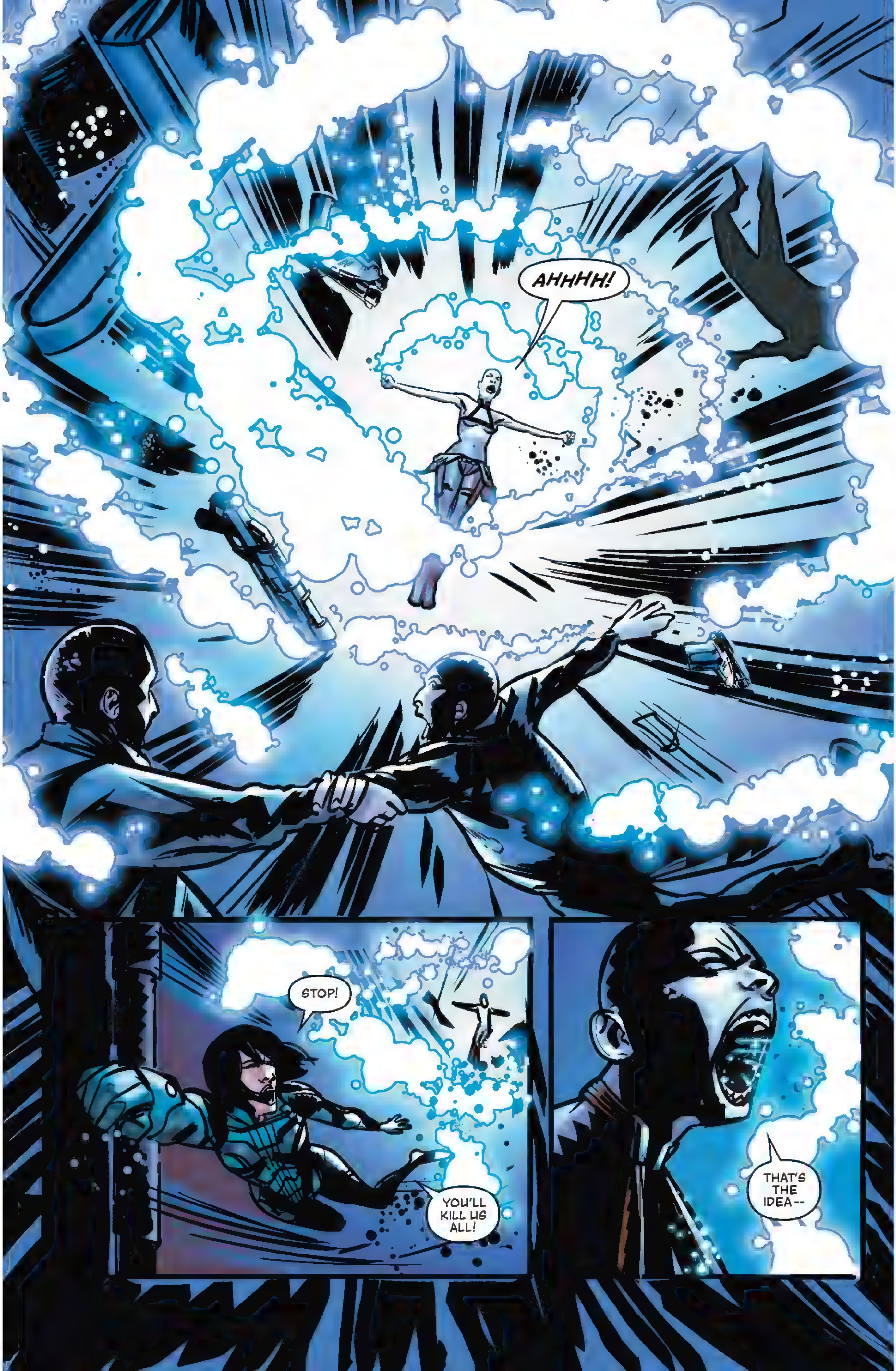

IF YOU WANT ME TO SHOOT YOU IN THE BACK, KEEP ON WALKING.
AND HERE I THOUGHT I'D KILLED ALL THE CERBERUS SCUM ON THIS STATION.
LAST CHANCE TO STAND DOWN, BITCH.

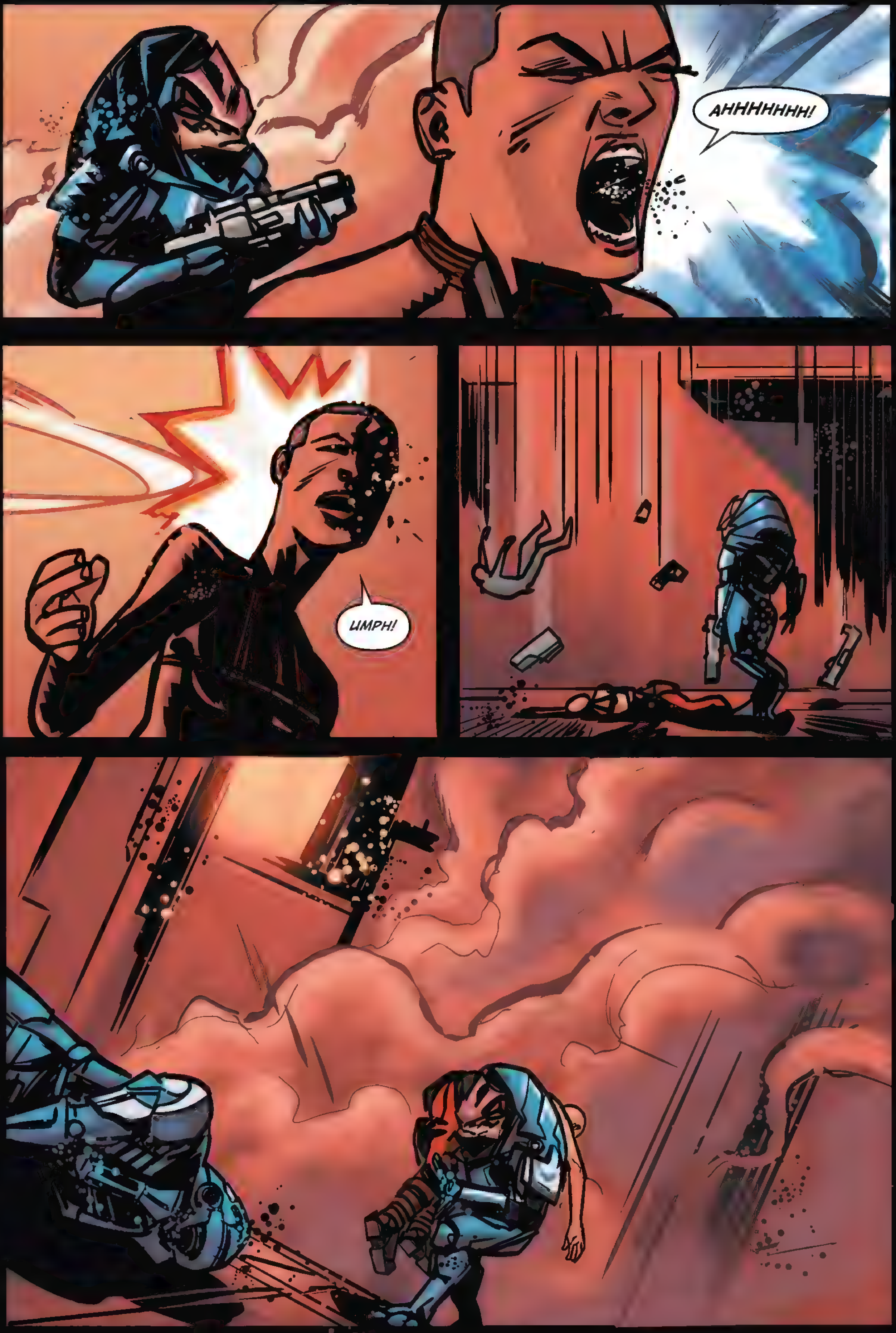

RAHHH!
ASSHOLE --
STAY DOWN --
IF YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU.

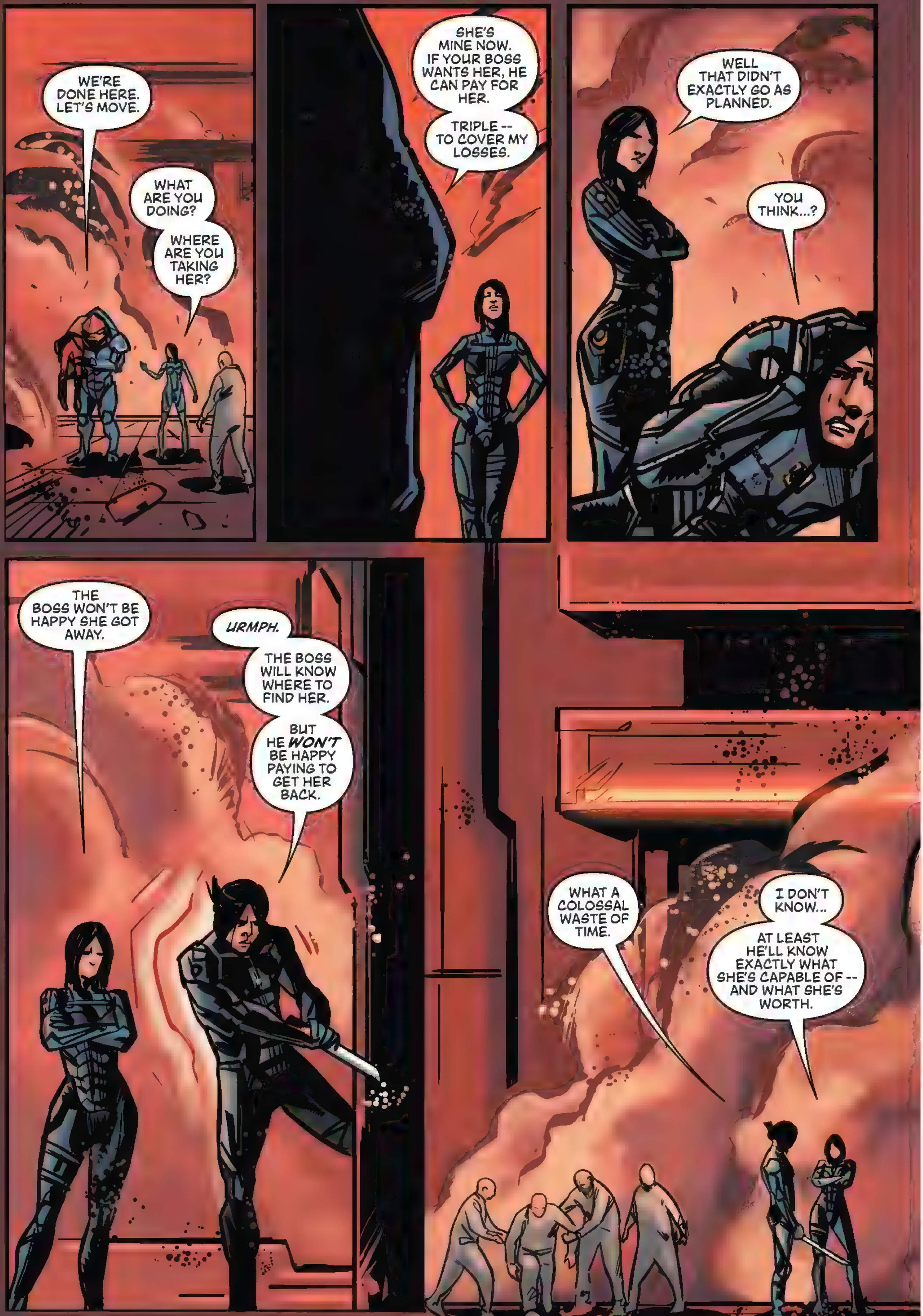


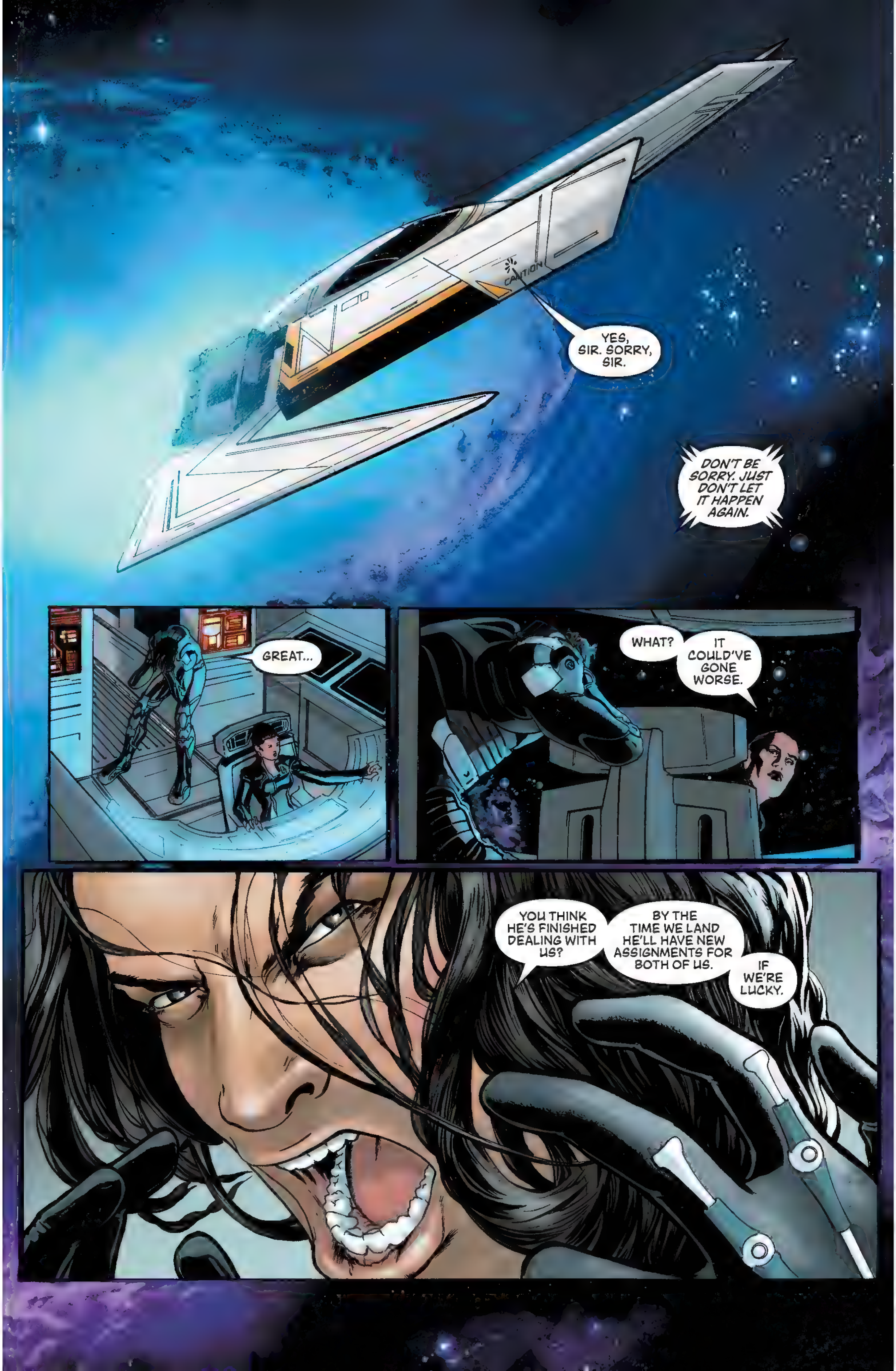

GOOD --
BUT NOT GOOD ENOUGH!
DOWN THERE!
YAAAGH!
UMPH!

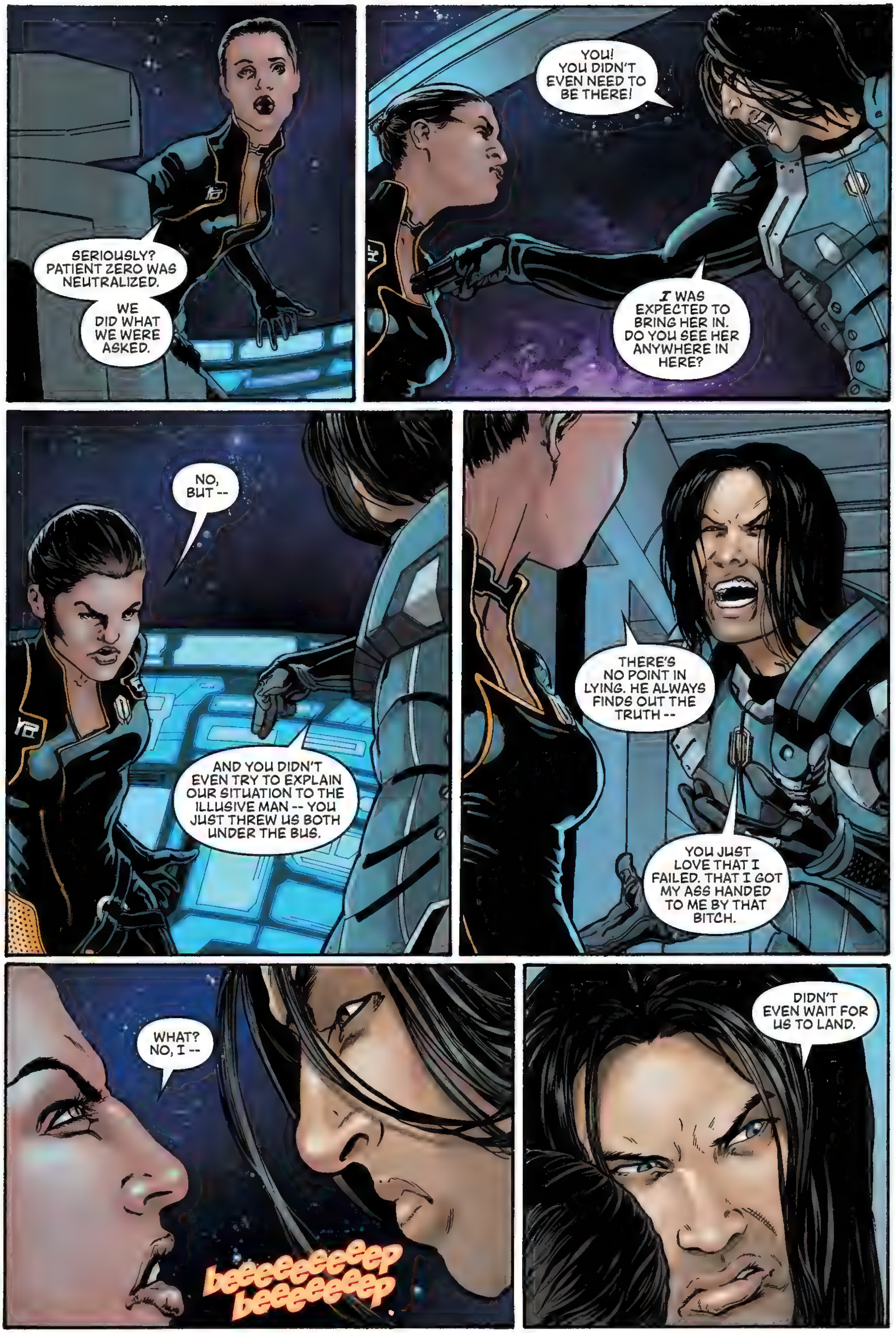

SHIT--
YOU WANT TO PLAY DIRTY--
LET'S PLAY DIRTY!

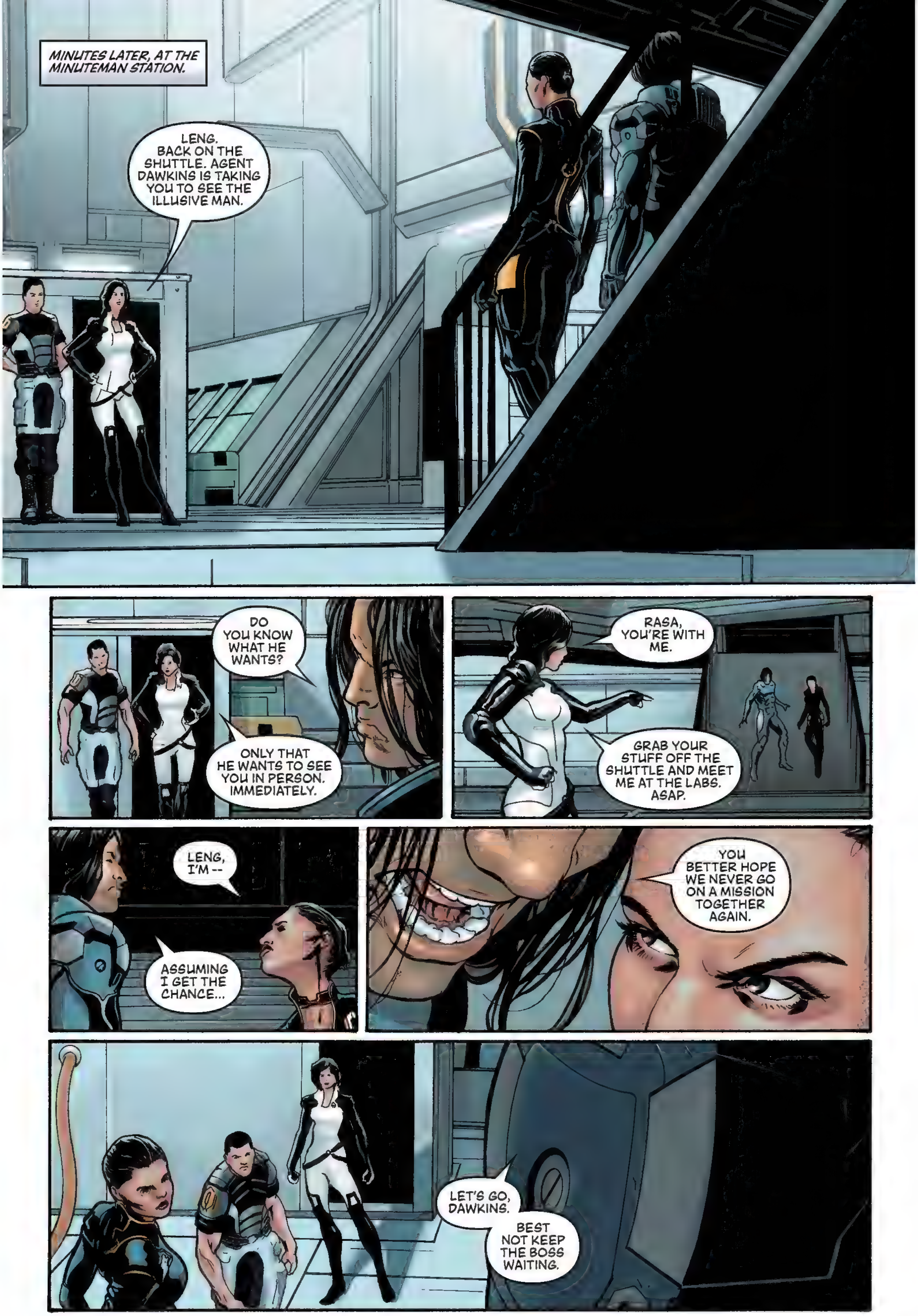

AHHHH!
STOP!
YOU'LL KILL US ALL!
THAT'S THE IDEA--

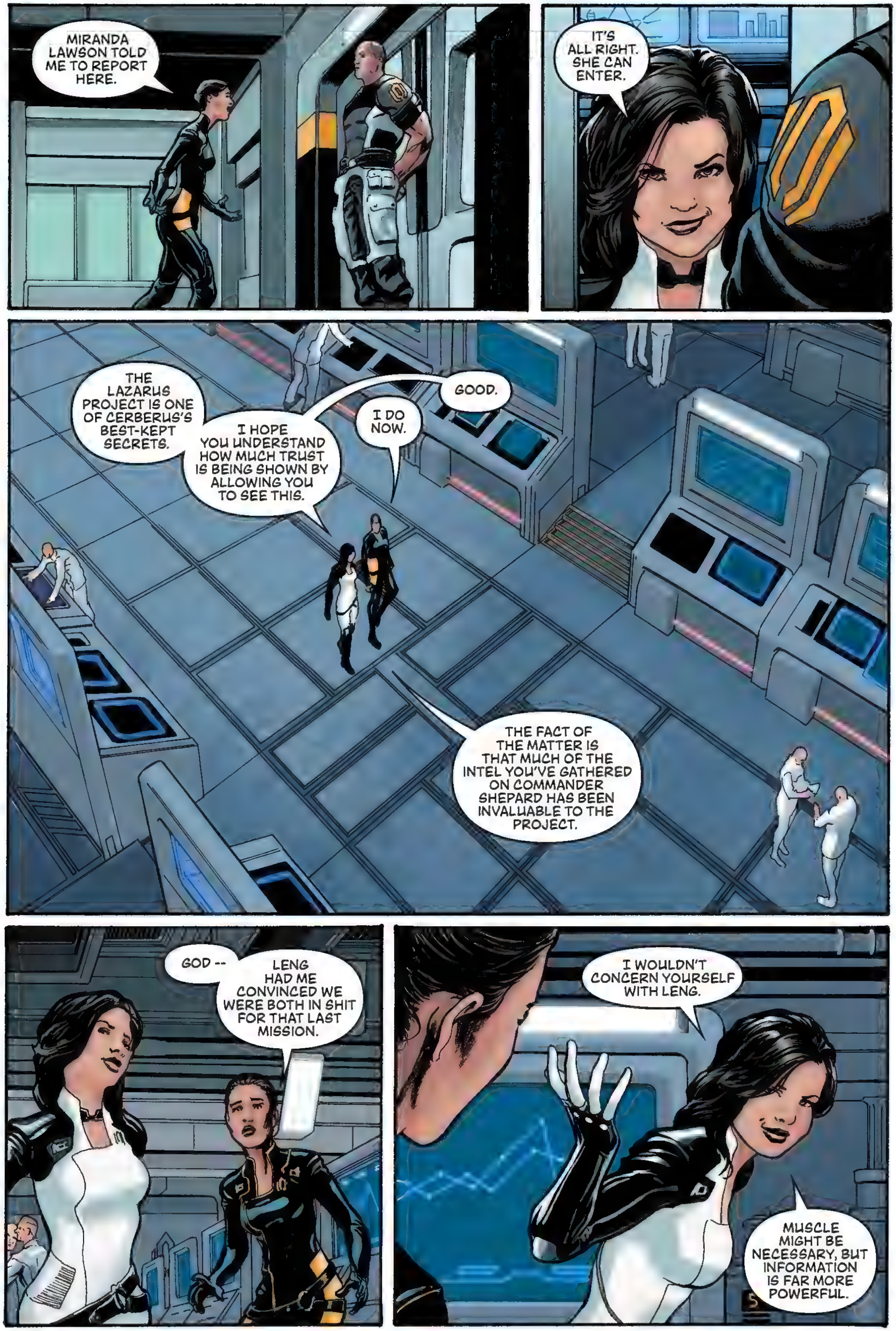

AHHHHHHH!
UMPH!

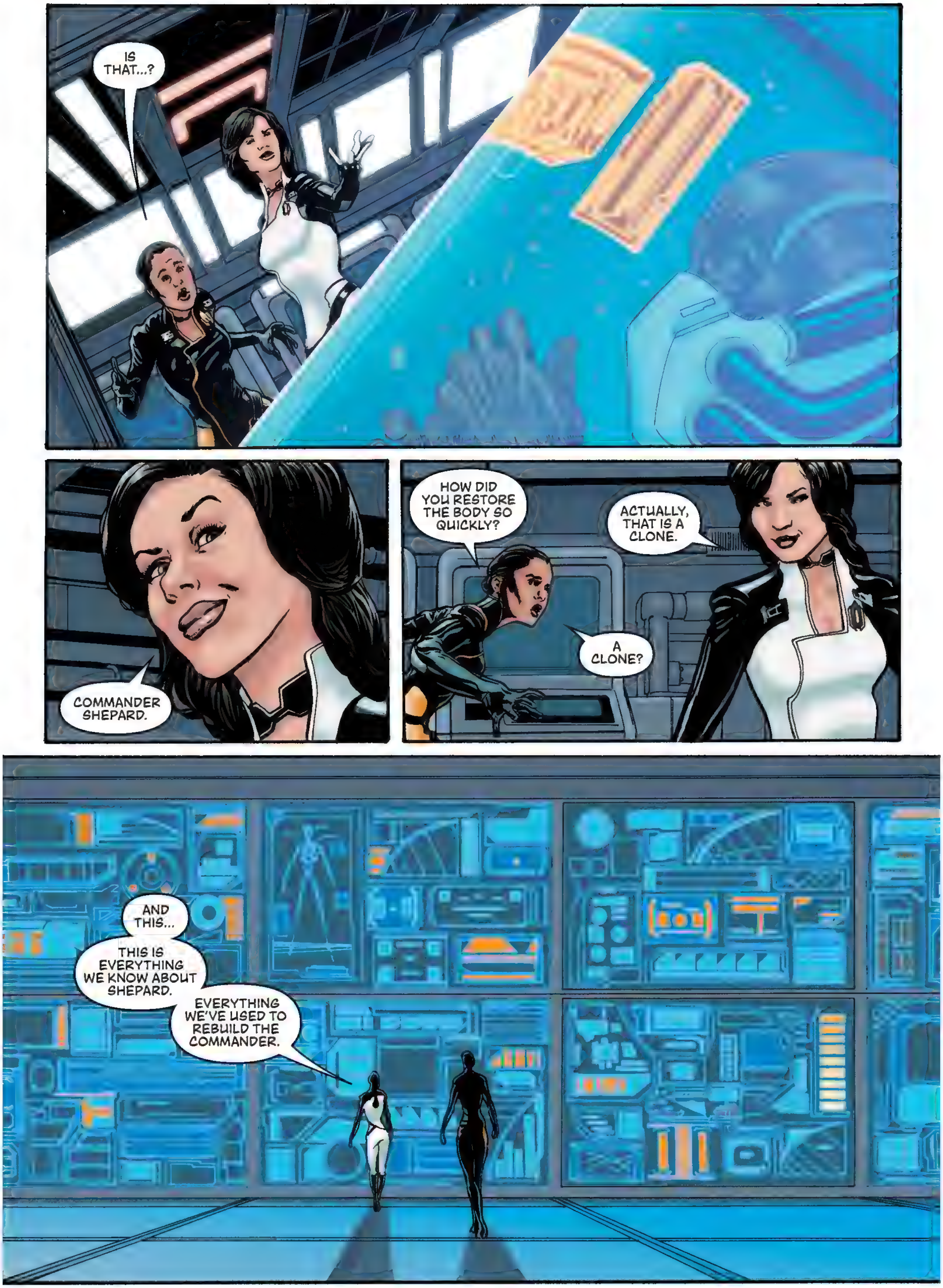

WE'RE DONE HERE. LET'S MOVE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
WHERE ARE YOU TAKING HER?
SHE'S MINE NOW. IF YOUR BOSS WANTS HER, HE CAN PAY FOR HER.
TRIPLE -- TO COVER MY LOSSES.
WELL THAT DIDN'T EXACTLY GO AS PLANNED.
YOU THINK...?
THE BOSS WON'T BE HAPPY SHE GOT AWAY.
URMPH.
THE BOSS WILL KNOW WHERE TO FIND HER.
BUT HE WON'T BE HAPPY PAYING TO GET HER BACK.
WHAT A COLOSSAL WASTE OF TIME.
I DON'T KNOW...
AT LEAST HE'LL KNOW EXACTLY WHAT SHE'S CAPABLE OF -- AND WHAT SHE'S WORTH.

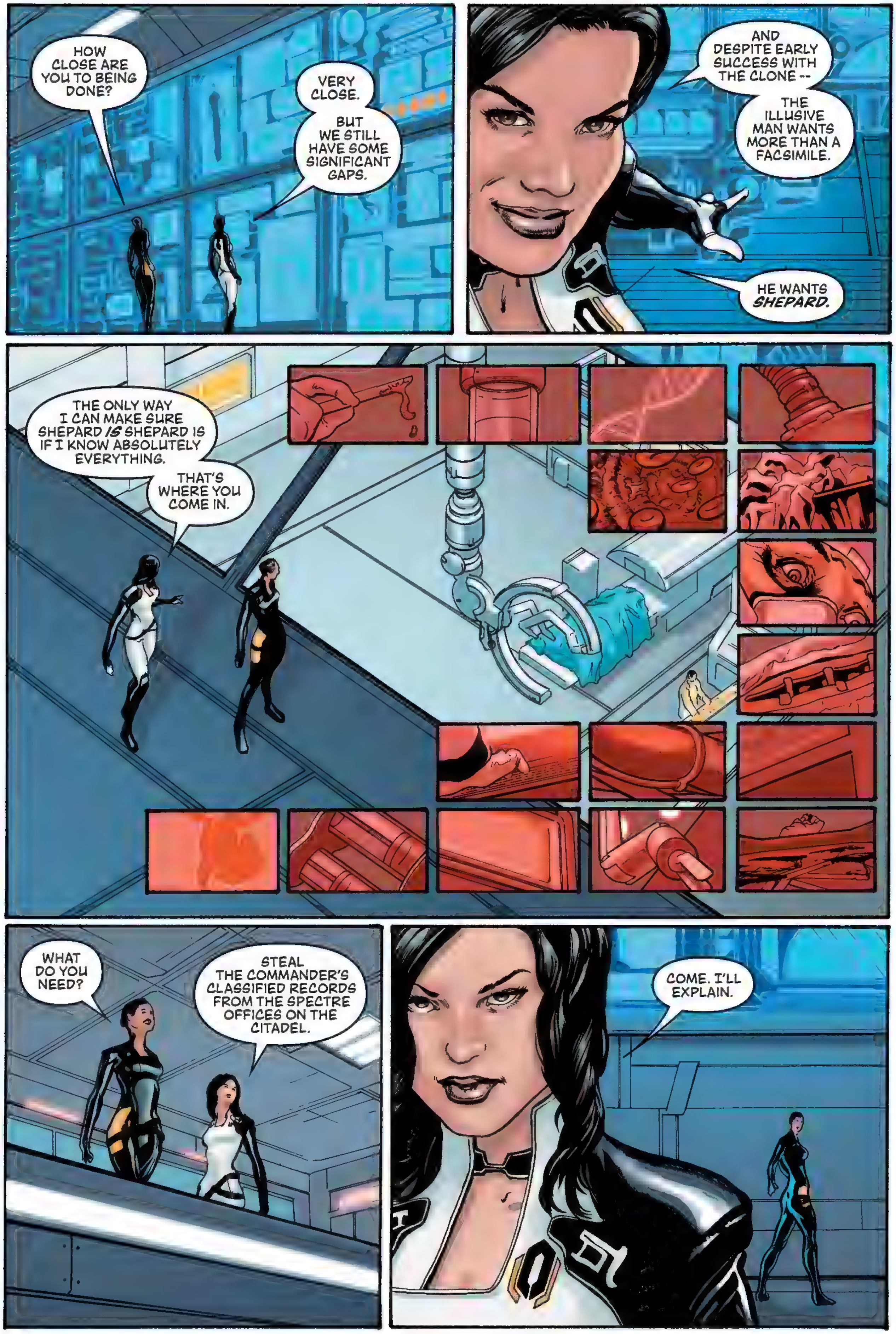

CAUTION
YES, SIR. SORRY, SIR.
DON'T BE SORRY. JUST DON'T LET IT HAPPEN AGAIN.
GREAT...
WHAT?
IT COULD'VE GONE WORSE.
YOU THINK HE'S FINISHED DEALING WITH US?
BY THE TIME WE LAND HE'LL HAVE NEW ASSIGNMENTS FOR BOTH OF US.
IF WE'RE LUCKY.

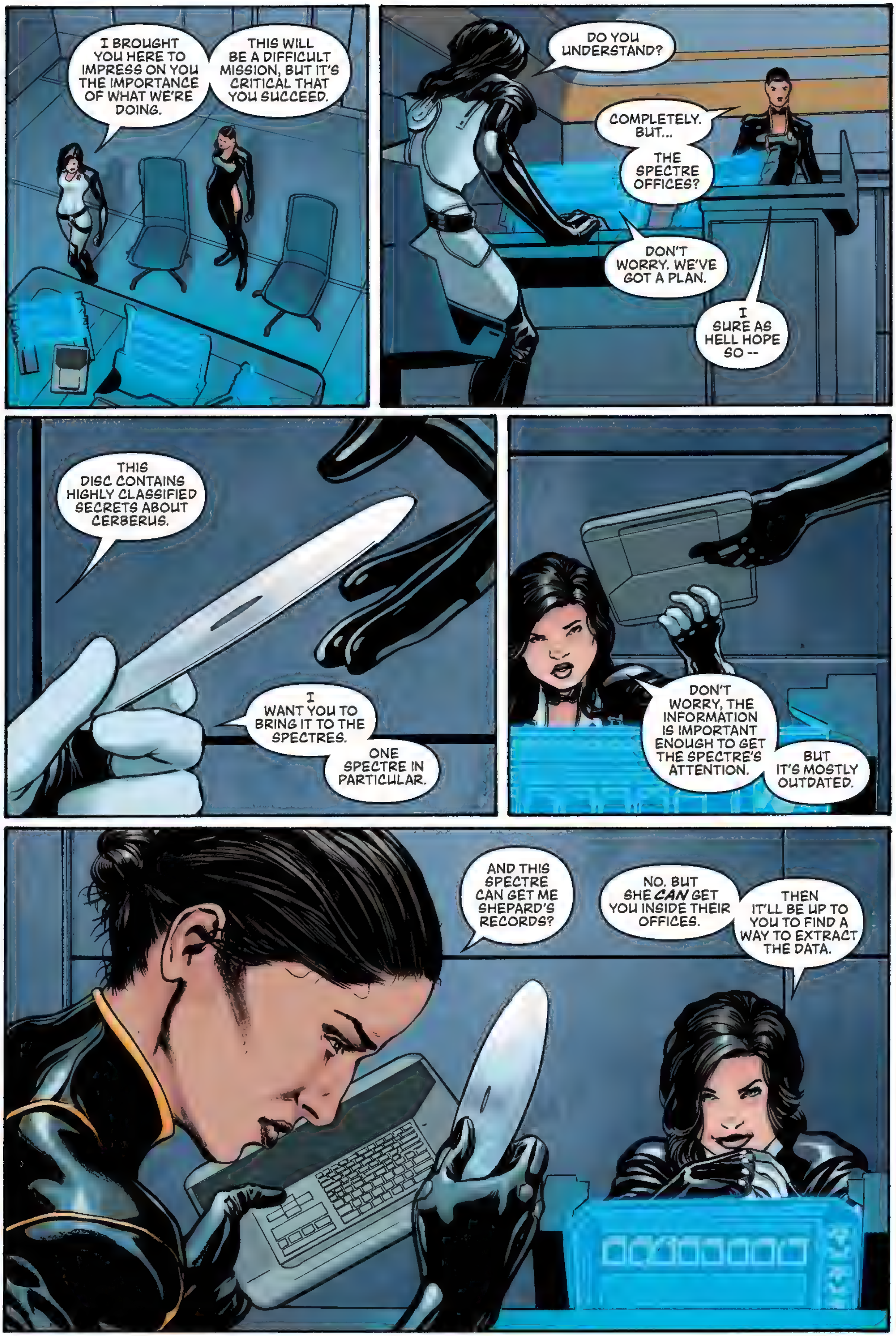

SERIOUSLY? PATIENT ZERO WAS NEUTRALIZED.
WE DID WHAT WE WERE ASKED.
YOU! YOU DIDN'T EVEN NEED TO BE THERE!
I WAS EXPECTED TO BRING HER IN. DO YOU SEE HER ANYWHERE IN HERE?
NO, BUT --
AND YOU DIDN'T EVEN TRY TO EXPLAIN OUR SITUATION TO THE ILLUSIVE MAN -- YOU JUST THREW US BOTH UNDER THE BUS.
THERE'S NO POINT IN LYING. HE ALWAYS FINDS OUT THE TRUTH --
YOU JUST LOVE THAT I FAILED. THAT I GOT MY ASS HANDED TO ME BY THAT BITCH.
WHAT? NO, I --
beeeeeeeeep beeeeeeep
DIDN'T EVEN WAIT FOR US TO LAND.

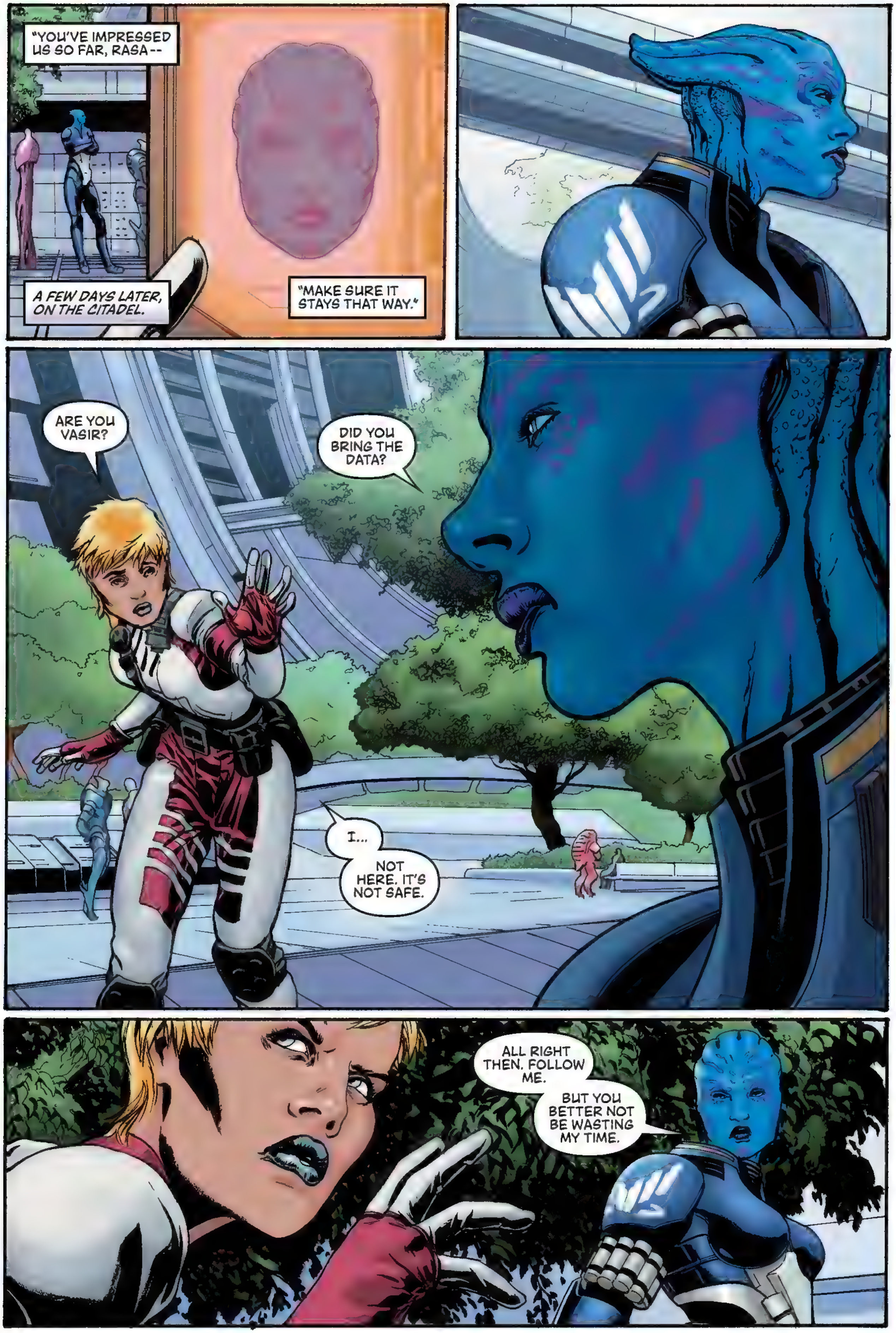

MINUTES LATER, AT THE MINUTEMAN STATION.
LENG. BACK ON THE SHUTTLE. AGENT DAWKINS IS TAKING YOU TO SEE THE ILLUSIVE MAN.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT HE WANTS?
ONLY THAT HE WANTS TO SEE YOU IN PERSON. IMMEDIATELY.
RASA, YOU'RE WITH ME.
GRAB YOUR STUFF OFF THE SHUTTLE AND MEET ME AT THE LABS. ASAP.
LENG, I'M --
ASSUMING I GET THE CHANCE...
YOU BETTER HOPE WE NEVER GO ON A MISSION TOGETHER AGAIN.
LET'S GO, DAWKINS.
BEST NOT KEEP THE BOSS WAITING.

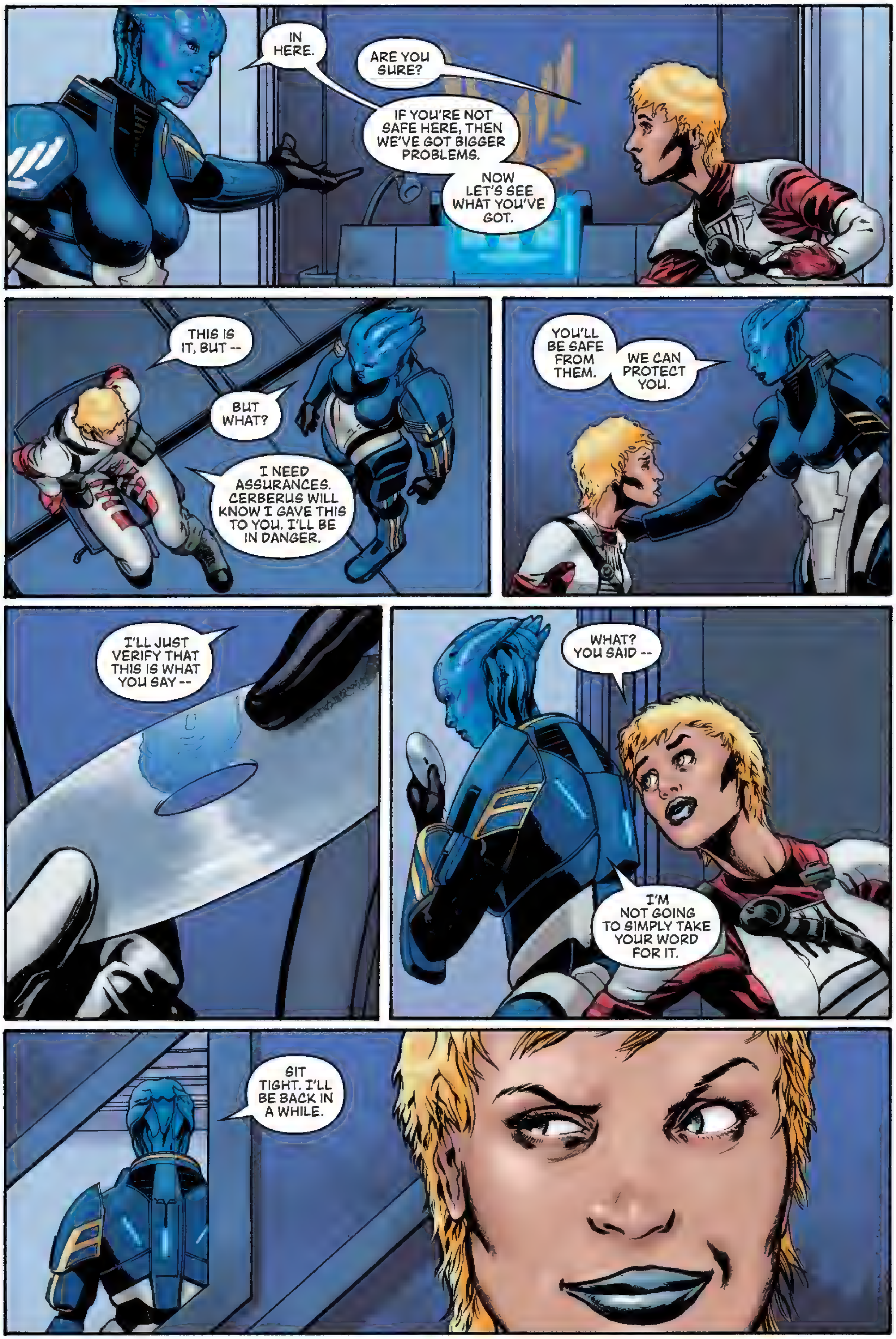

MIRANDA LAWSON TOLD ME TO REPORT HERE.
IT'S ALL RIGHT. SHE CAN ENTER.
THE LAZARUS PROJECT IS ONE OF CERBERUS'S BEST-KEPT SECRETS.
I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND HOW MUCH TRUST IS BEING SHOWN BY ALLOWING YOU TO SEE THIS.
I DO NOW.
GOOD.
THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS THAT MUCH OF THE INTEL YOU'VE GATHERED ON COMMANDER SHEPARD HAS BEEN INVALUABLE TO THE PROJECT.
GOD --
LENG HAD ME CONVINCED WE WERE BOTH IN SHIT FOR THAT LAST MISSION.
I WOULDN'T CONCERN YOURSELF WITH LENG.
MUSCLE MIGHT BE NECESSARY, BUT INFORMATION IS FAR MORE POWERFUL.

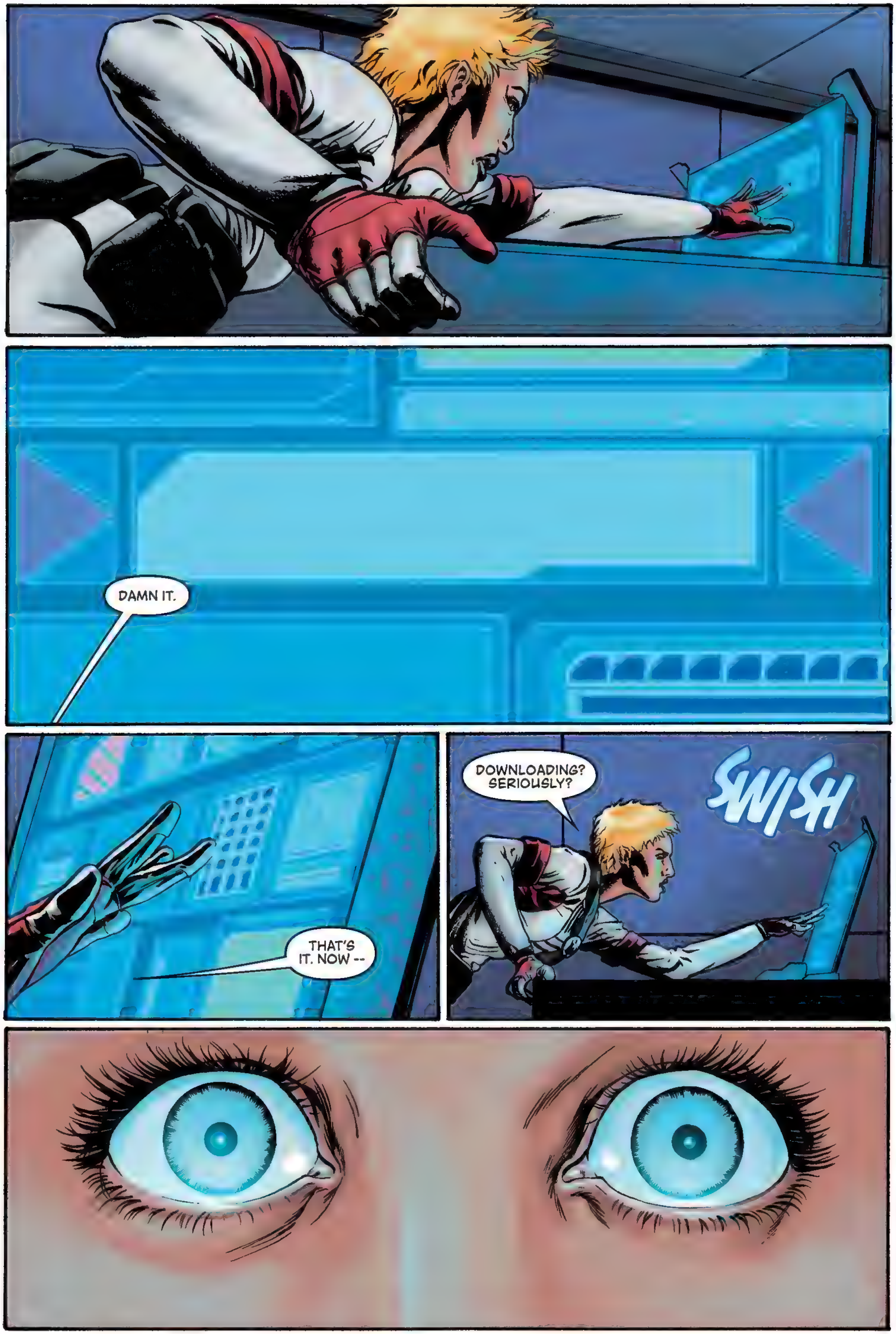

IS THAT...?
COMMANDER SHEPARD.
HOW DID YOU RESTORE THE BODY SO QUICKLY?
ACTUALLY, THAT IS A CLONE.
A CLONE?
AND THIS...
THIS IS EVERYTHING WE KNOW ABOUT SHEPARD.
EVERYTHING WE'VE USED TO REBUILD THE COMMANDER.

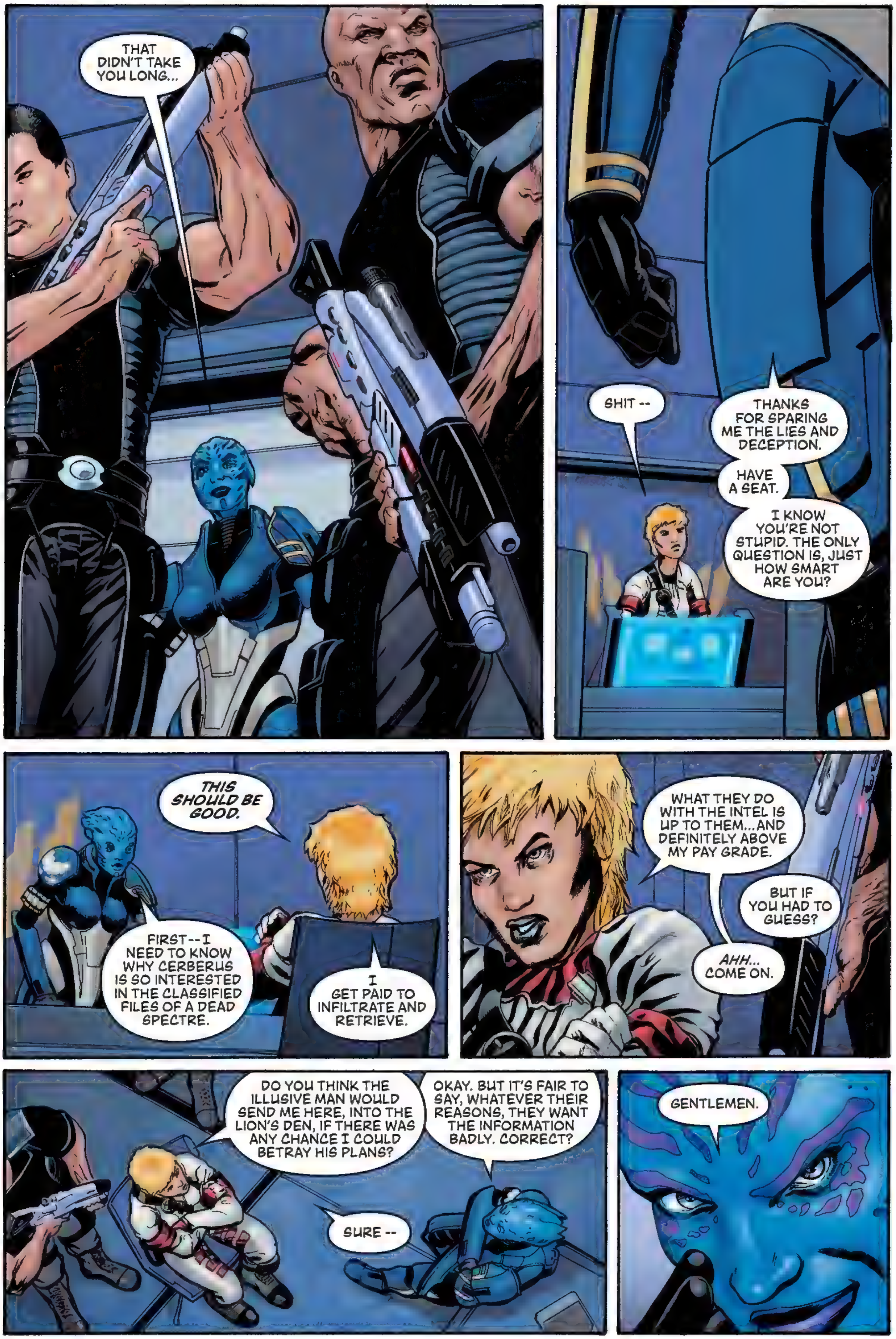

HOW CLOSE ARE YOU TO BEING DONE?
VERY CLOSE.
BUT WE STILL HAVE SOME SIGNIFICANT GAPS.
AND DESPITE EARLY SUCCESS WITH THE CLONE --
THE ILLUSIVE MAN WANTS MORE THAN A FACSIMILE.
HE WANTS *SHEPARD.*
THE ONLY WAY I CAN MAKE SURE SHEPARD *IS* SHEPARD IS IF I KNOW ABSOLUTELY EVERYTHING.
THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN.
WHAT DO YOU NEED?
STEAL THE COMMANDER'S CLASSIFIED RECORDS FROM THE SPECTRE OFFICES ON THE CITADEL.
COME. I'LL EXPLAIN.

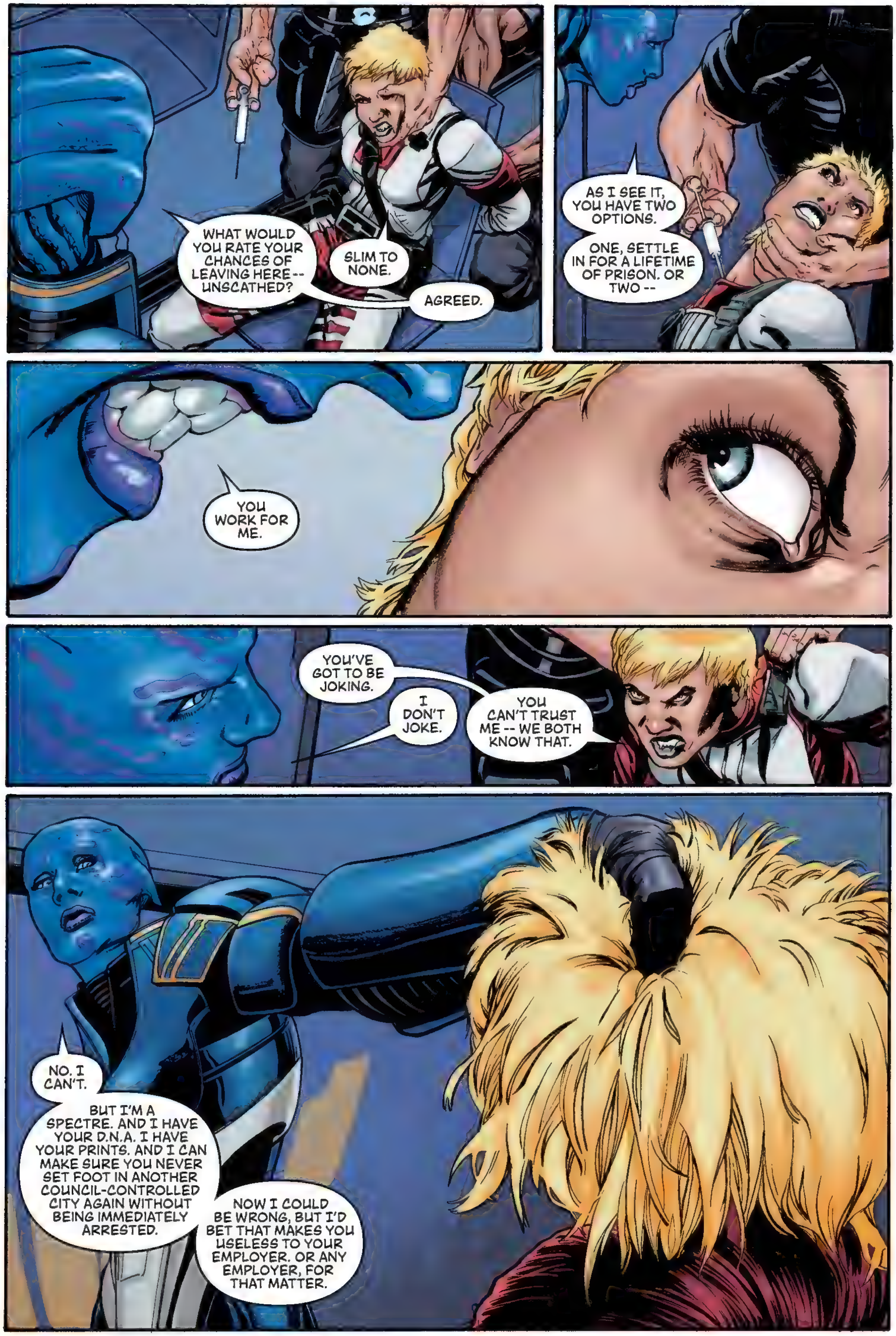

I BROUGHT YOU HERE TO IMPRESS ON YOU THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT WE'RE DOING.
THIS WILL BE A DIFFICULT MISSION, BUT IT'S CRITICAL THAT YOU SUCCEED.
DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
COMPLETELY. BUT...
THE SPECTRE OFFICES?
DON'T WORRY. WE'VE GOT A PLAN.
I SURE AS HELL HOPE SO --
THIS DISC CONTAINS HIGHLY CLASSIFIED SECRETS ABOUT CERBERUS.
I WANT YOU TO BRING IT TO THE SPECTRES.
ONE SPECTRE IN PARTICULAR.
DON'T WORRY, THE INFORMATION IS IMPORTANT ENOUGH TO GET THE SPECTRE'S ATTENTION.
BUT IT'S MOSTLY OUTDATED.
AND THIS SPECTRE CAN GET ME SHEPARD'S RECORDS?
NO. BUT SHE *CAN* GET YOU INSIDE THEIR OFFICES.
THEN IT'LL BE UP TO YOU TO FIND A WAY TO EXTRACT THE DATA.

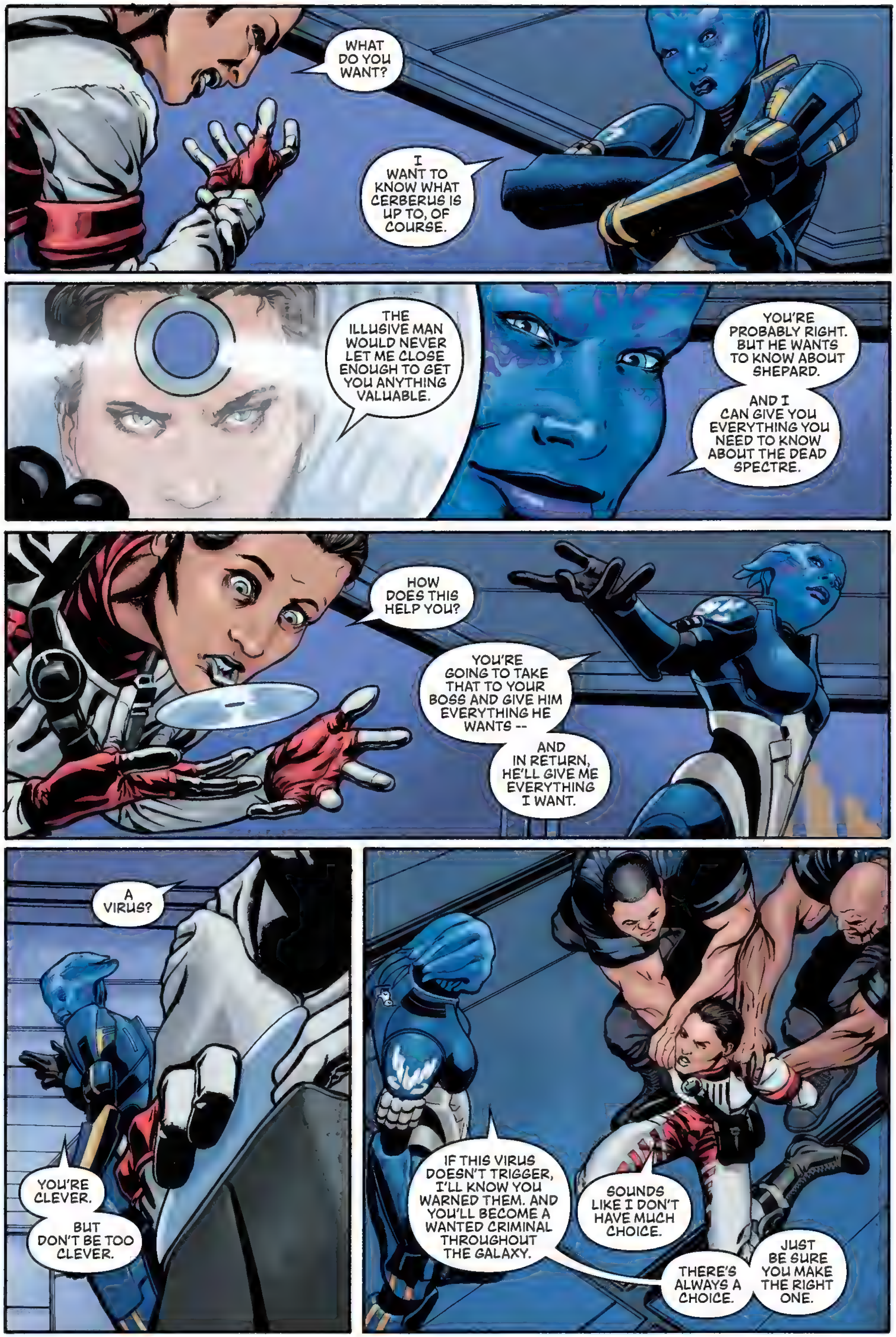

"YOU'VE IMPRESSED US SO FAR, RASA--
A FEW DAYS LATER, ON THE CITADEL.
"MAKE SURE IT STAYS THAT WAY."
ARE YOU VASIR?
DID YOU BRING THE DATA?
I...
NOT HERE. IT'S NOT SAFE.
ALL RIGHT THEN. FOLLOW ME.
BUT YOU BETTER NOT BE WASTING MY TIME.

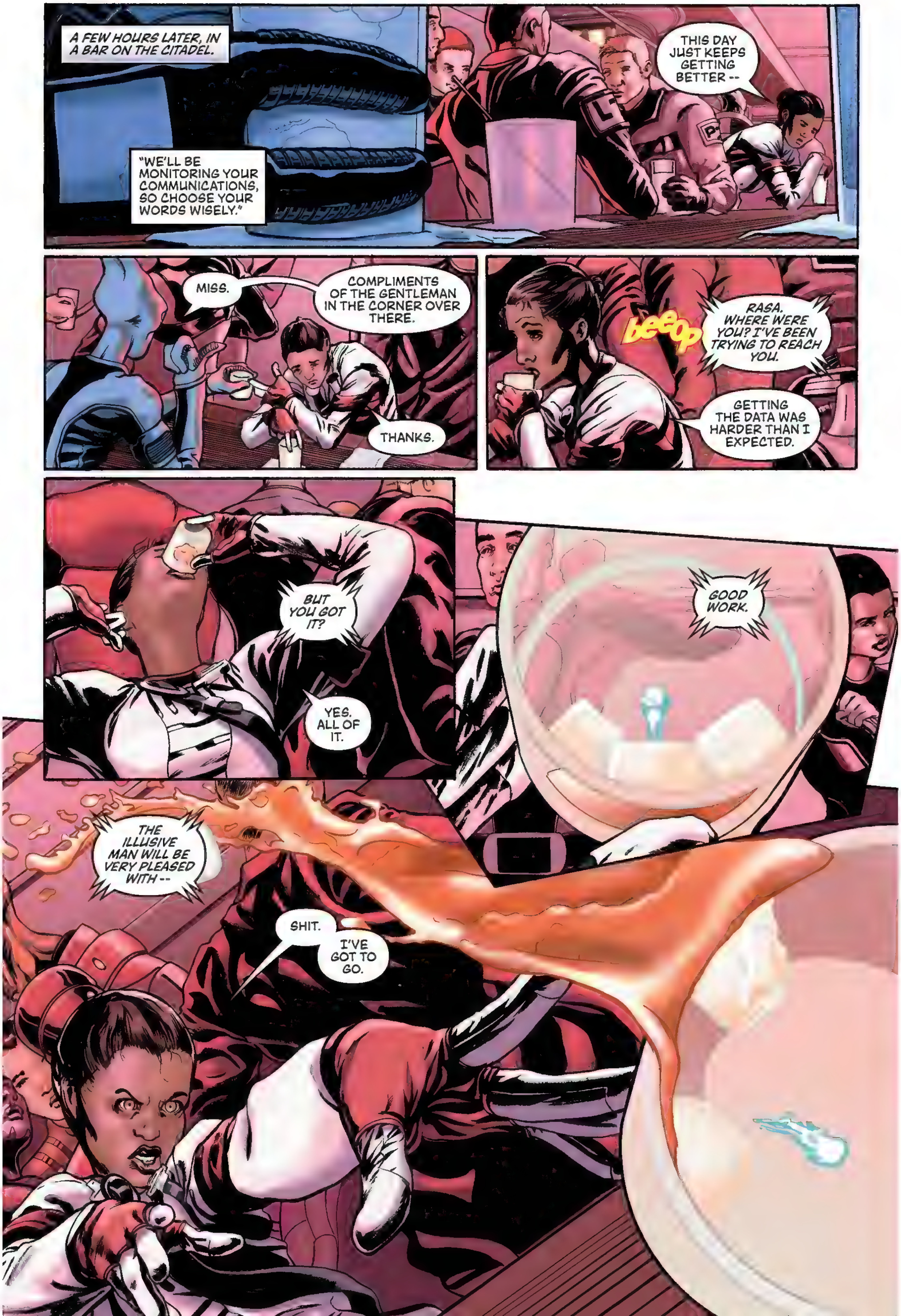

IN HERE.
ARE YOU SURE?
IF YOU'RE NOT SAFE HERE, THEN WE'VE GOT BIGGER PROBLEMS.
NOW LET'S SEE WHAT YOU'VE GOT.
THIS IS IT, BUT --
BUT WHAT?
I NEED ASSURANCES. CERBERUS WILL KNOW I GAVE THIS TO YOU. I'LL BE IN DANGER.
YOU'LL BE SAFE FROM THEM.
WE CAN PROTECT YOU.
I'LL JUST VERIFY THAT THIS IS WHAT YOU SAY --
WHAT? YOU SAID --
I'M NOT GOING TO SIMPLY TAKE YOUR WORD FOR IT.
SIT TIGHT. I'LL BE BACK IN A WHILE.

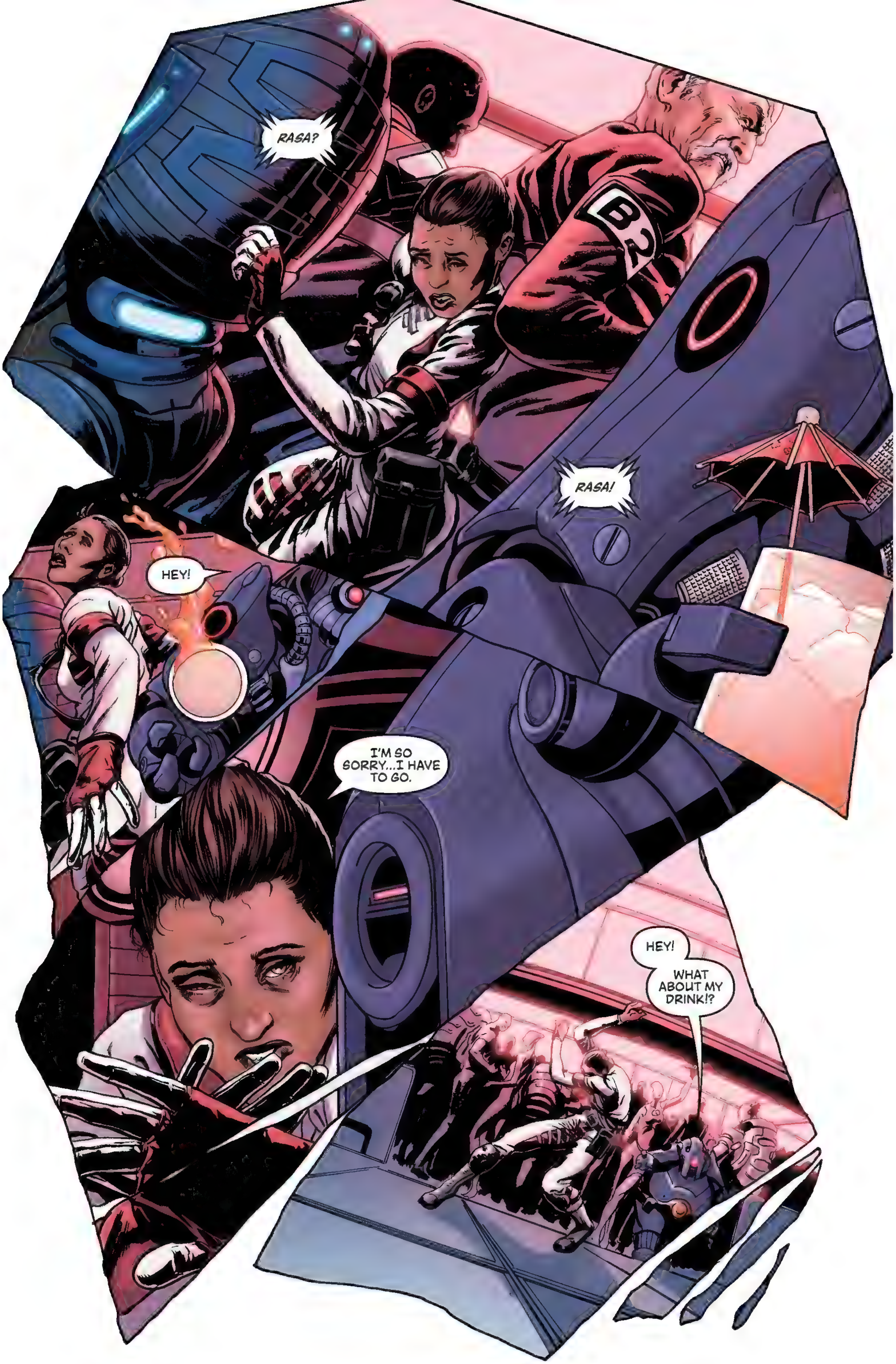

DAMN IT.
THAT'S IT. NOW --
DOWNLOADING? SERIOUSLY?
SWISH

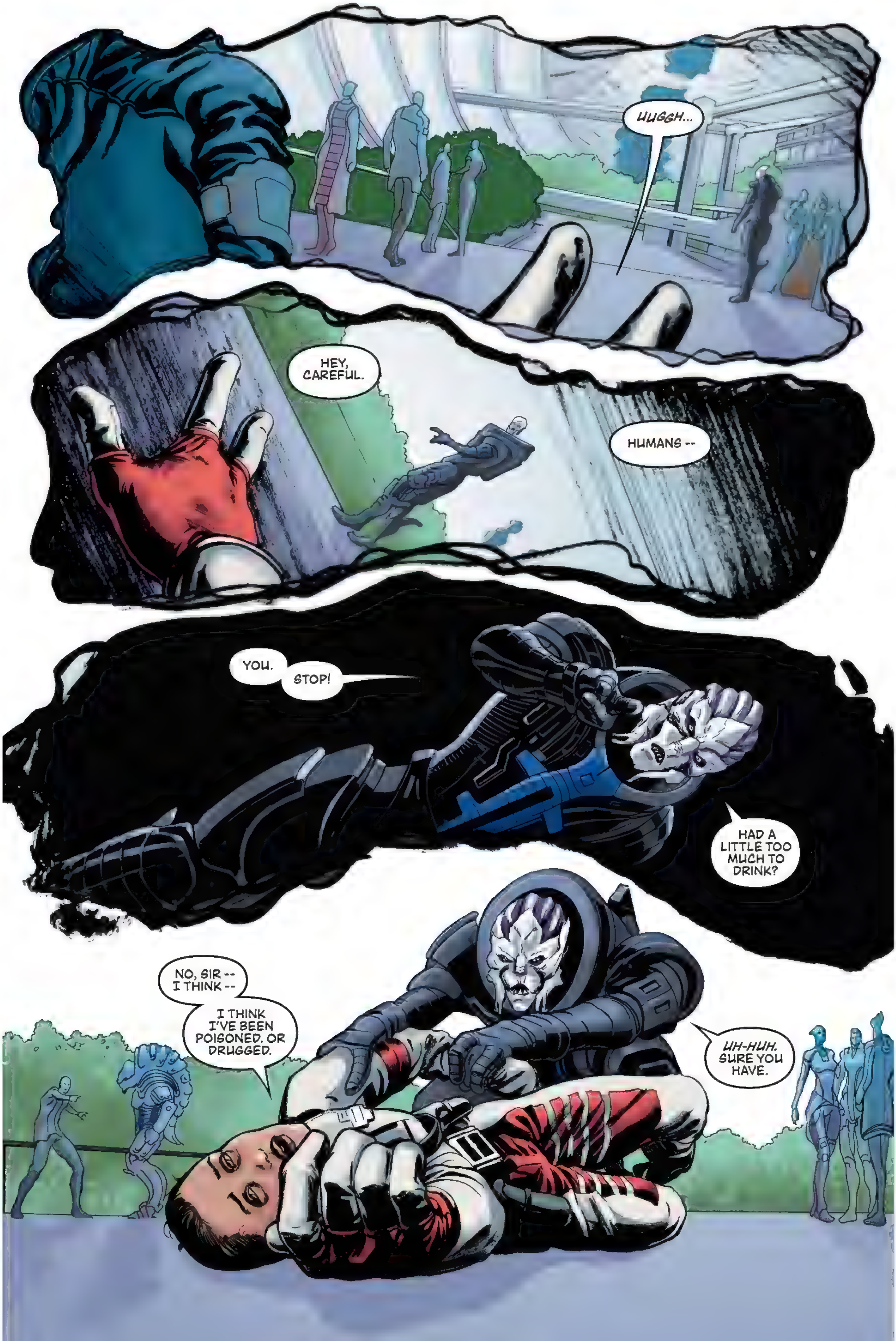

THAT DIDN'T TAKE YOU LONG...
SHIT --
THANKS FOR SPARING ME THE LIES AND DECEPTION.
HAVE A SEAT.
I KNOW YOU'RE NOT STUPID. THE ONLY QUESTION IS, JUST HOW SMART ARE YOU?
THIS SHOULD BE GOOD.
FIRST--I NEED TO KNOW WHY CERBERUS IS SO INTERESTED IN THE CLASSIFIED FILES OF A DEAD SPECTRE.
I GET PAID TO INFILTRATE AND RETRIEVE.
WHAT THEY DO WITH THE INTEL IS UP TO THEM...AND DEFINITELY ABOVE MY PAY GRADE.
BUT IF YOU HAD TO GUESS?
AHH... COME ON.
DO YOU THINK THE ILLUSIVE MAN WOULD SEND ME HERE, INTO THE LION'S DEN, IF THERE WAS ANY CHANCE I COULD BETRAY HIS PLANS?
SURE --
OKAY. BUT IT'S FAIR TO SAY, WHATEVER THEIR REASONS, THEY WANT THE INFORMATION BADLY. CORRECT?
GENTLEMEN.

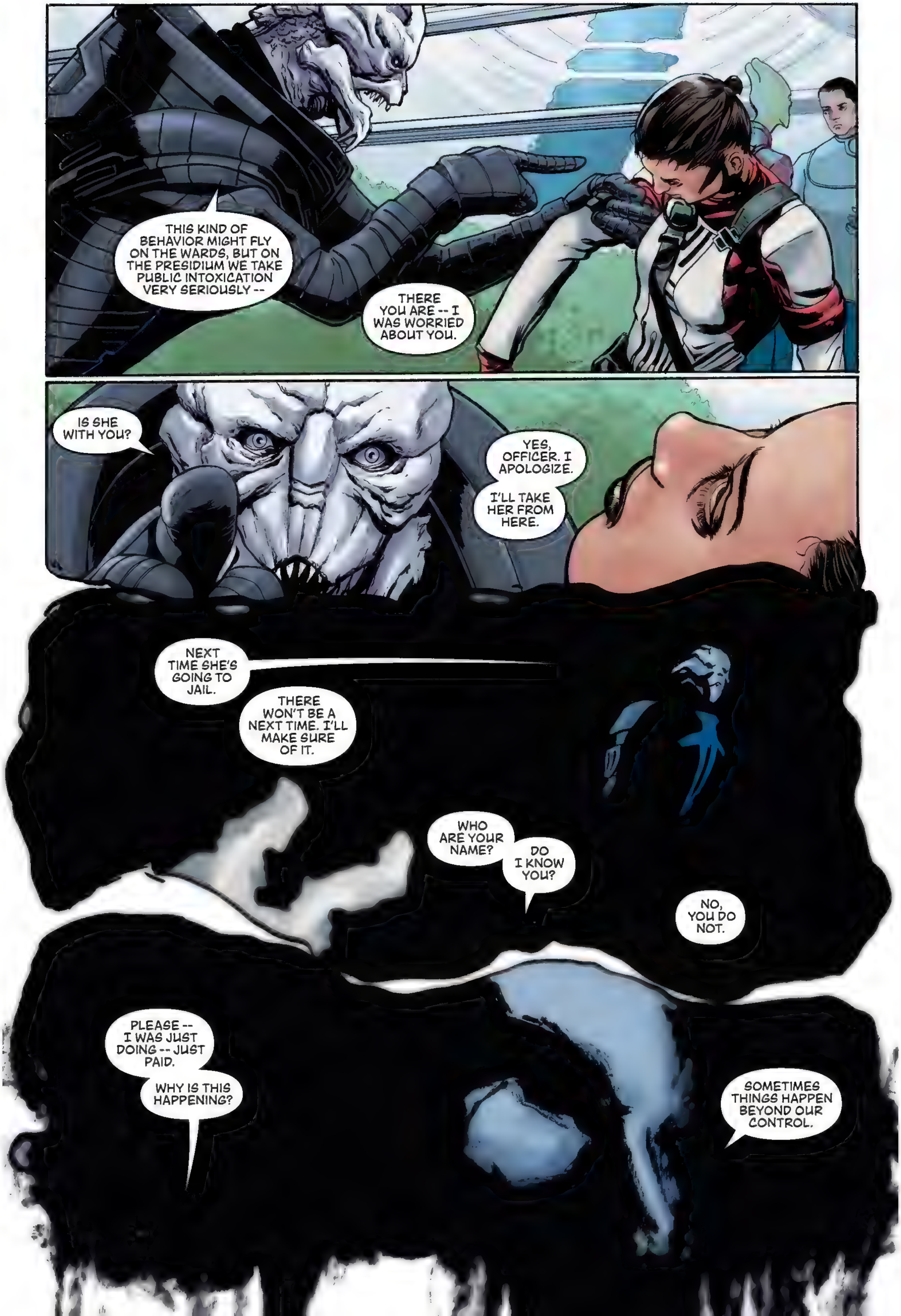

WHAT WOULD YOU RATE YOUR CHANCES OF LEAVING HERE -- UNSCATHED?
SLIM TO NONE.
AGREED.
AS I SEE IT, YOU HAVE TWO OPTIONS.
ONE, SETTLE IN FOR A LIFETIME OF PRISON. OR TWO --
YOU WORK FOR ME.
YOU'VE GOT TO BE JOKING.
I DON'T JOKE.
YOU CAN'T TRUST ME -- WE BOTH KNOW THAT.
NO. I CAN'T.
BUT I'M A SPECTRE. AND I HAVE YOUR D.N.A. I HAVE YOUR PRINTS. AND I CAN MAKE SURE YOU NEVER SET FOOT IN ANOTHER COUNCIL-CONTROLLED CITY AGAIN WITHOUT BEING IMMEDIATELY ARRESTED.
NOW I COULD BE WRONG, BUT I'D BET THAT MAKES YOU USELESS TO YOUR EMPLOYER. OR ANY EMPLOYER, FOR THAT MATTER.

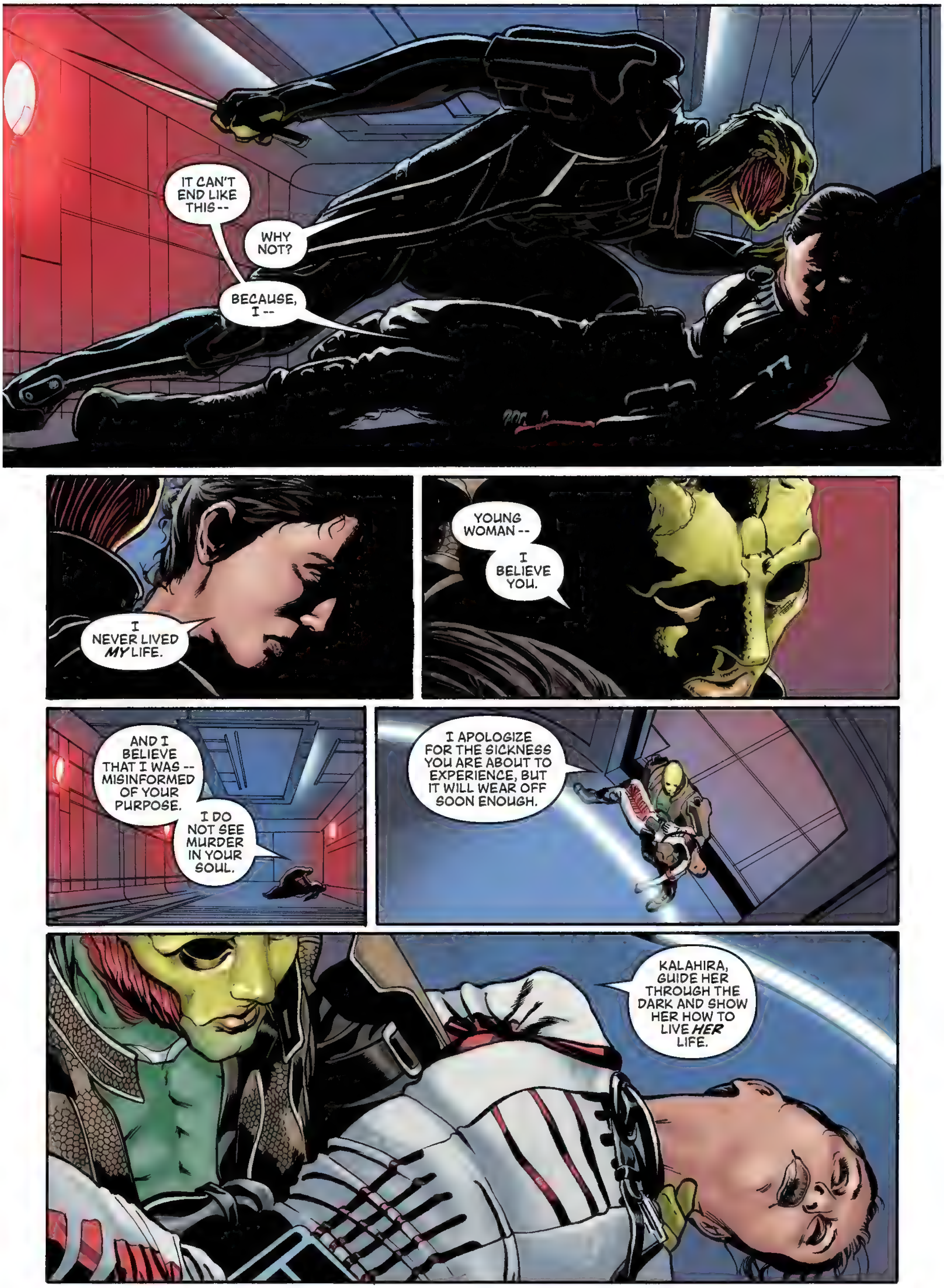

WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I WANT TO KNOW WHAT CERBERUS IS UP TO, OF COURSE.
THE ILLUSIVE MAN WOULD NEVER LET ME CLOSE ENOUGH TO GET YOU ANYTHING VALUABLE.
YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT. BUT HE WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT SHEPARD.
AND I CAN GIVE YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE DEAD SPECTRE.
HOW DOES THIS HELP YOU?
YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE THAT TO YOUR BOSS AND GIVE HIM EVERYTHING HE WANTS --
AND IN RETURN, HE'LL GIVE ME EVERYTHING I WANT.
A VIRUS?
YOU'RE CLEVER.
BUT DON'T BE TOO CLEVER.
IF THIS VIRUS DOESN'T TRIGGER, I'LL KNOW YOU WARNED THEM. AND YOU'LL BECOME A WANTED CRIMINAL THROUGHOUT THE GALAXY.
SOUNDS LIKE I DON'T HAVE MUCH CHOICE.
THERE'S ALWAYS A CHOICE.
JUST BE SURE YOU MAKE THE RIGHT ONE.

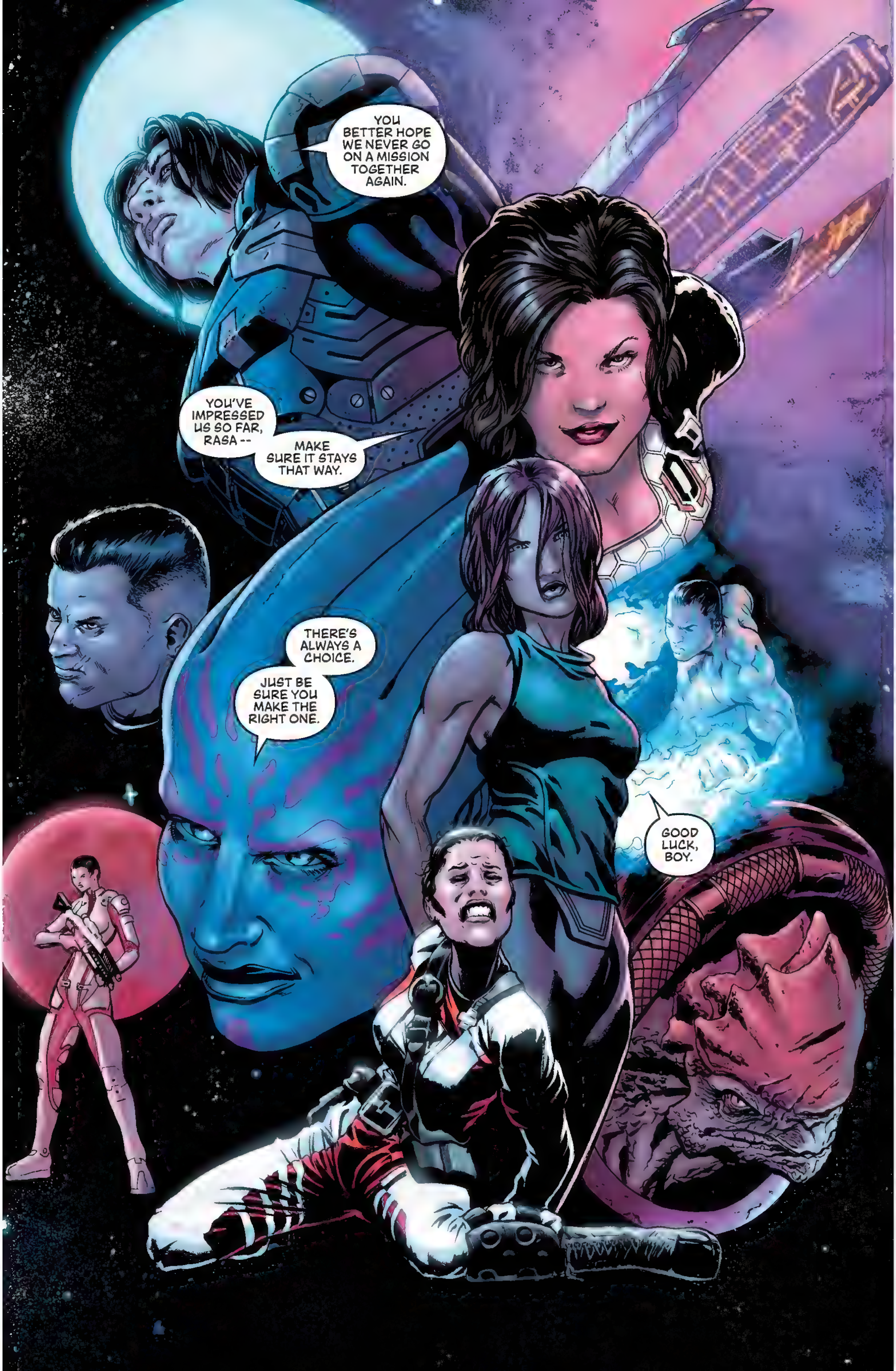

A FEW HOURS LATER, IN A BAR ON THE CITADEL.
"WE'LL BE MONITORING YOUR COMMUNICATIONS, SO CHOOSE YOUR WORDS WISELY."
THIS DAY JUST KEEPS GETTING BETTER --
MISS.
COMPLIMENTS OF THE GENTLEMAN IN THE CORNER OVER THERE.
THANKS.
beeop
RASA. WHERE WERE YOU? I'VE BEEN TRYING TO REACH YOU.
GETTING THE DATA WAS HARDER THAN I EXPECTED.
BUT YOU GOT IT?
YES. ALL OF IT.
GOOD WORK.
THE ILLUSIVE MAN WILL BE VERY PLEASED WITH --
SHIT.
I'VE GOT TO GO.

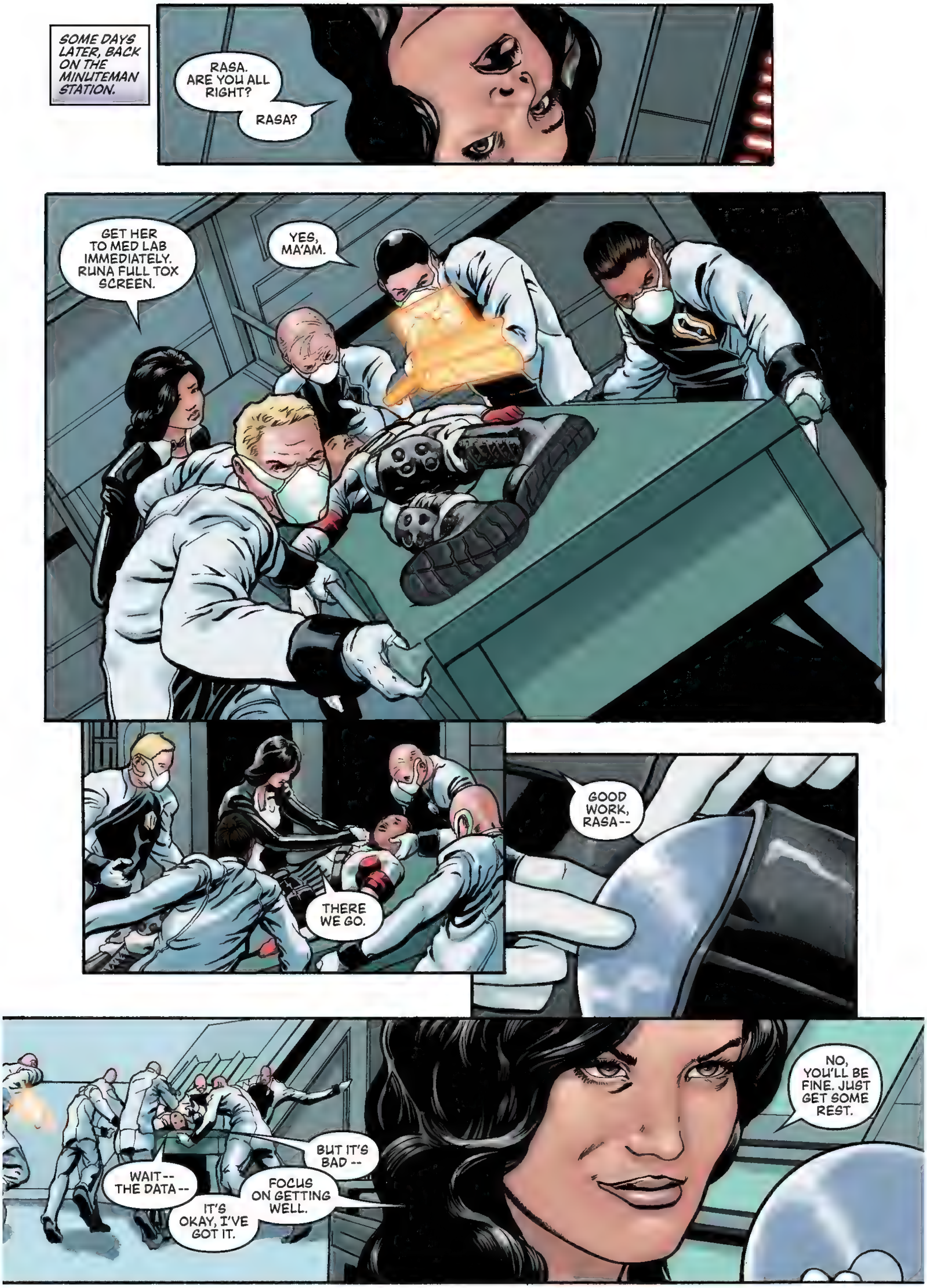

RASA?
B2
RASA!
HEY!
I'M SO SORRY...I HAVE TO GO.
HEY!
WHAT ABOUT MY DRINK!?

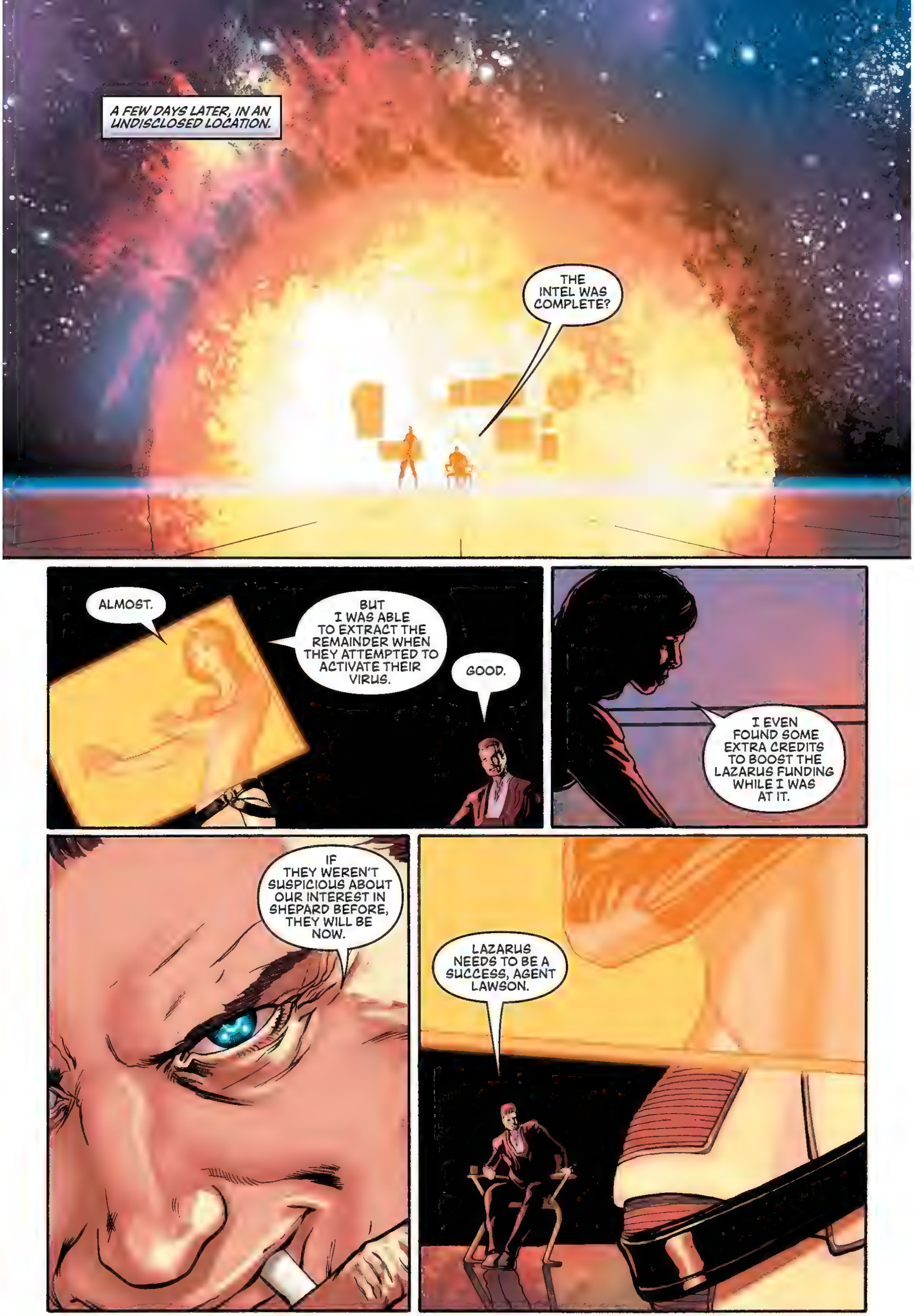

UUGGH...
HEY, CAREFUL.
HUMANS --
YOU.
STOP!
HAD A LITTLE TOO MUCH TO DRINK?
NO, SIR -- I THINK --
I THINK I'VE BEEN POISONED. OR DRUGGED.
UH-HUH. SURE YOU HAVE.

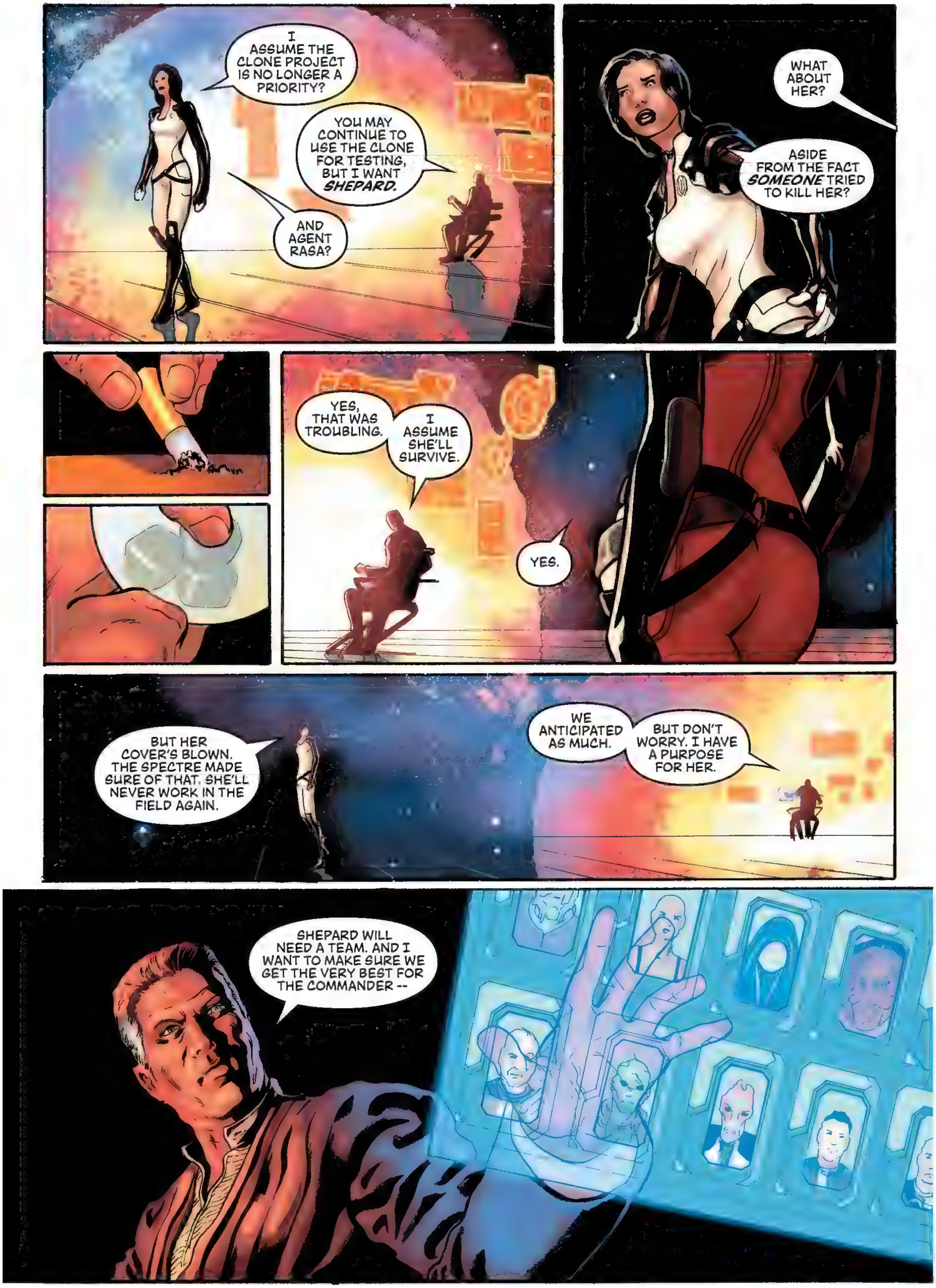

THIS KIND OF BEHAVIOR MIGHT FLY ON THE WARDS, BUT ON THE PRESIDIUM WE TAKE PUBLIC INTOXICATION VERY SERIOUSLY --
THERE YOU ARE -- I WAS WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
IS SHE WITH YOU?
YES, OFFICER. I APOLOGIZE.
I'LL TAKE HER FROM HERE.
NEXT TIME SHE'S GOING TO JAIL.
THERE WON'T BE A NEXT TIME. I'LL MAKE SURE OF IT.
WHO ARE YOUR NAME?
DO I KNOW YOU?
NO, YOU DO NOT.
PLEASE -- I WAS JUST DOING -- JUST PAID.
WHY IS THIS HAPPENING?
SOMETIMES THINGS HAPPEN BEYOND OUR CONTROL.

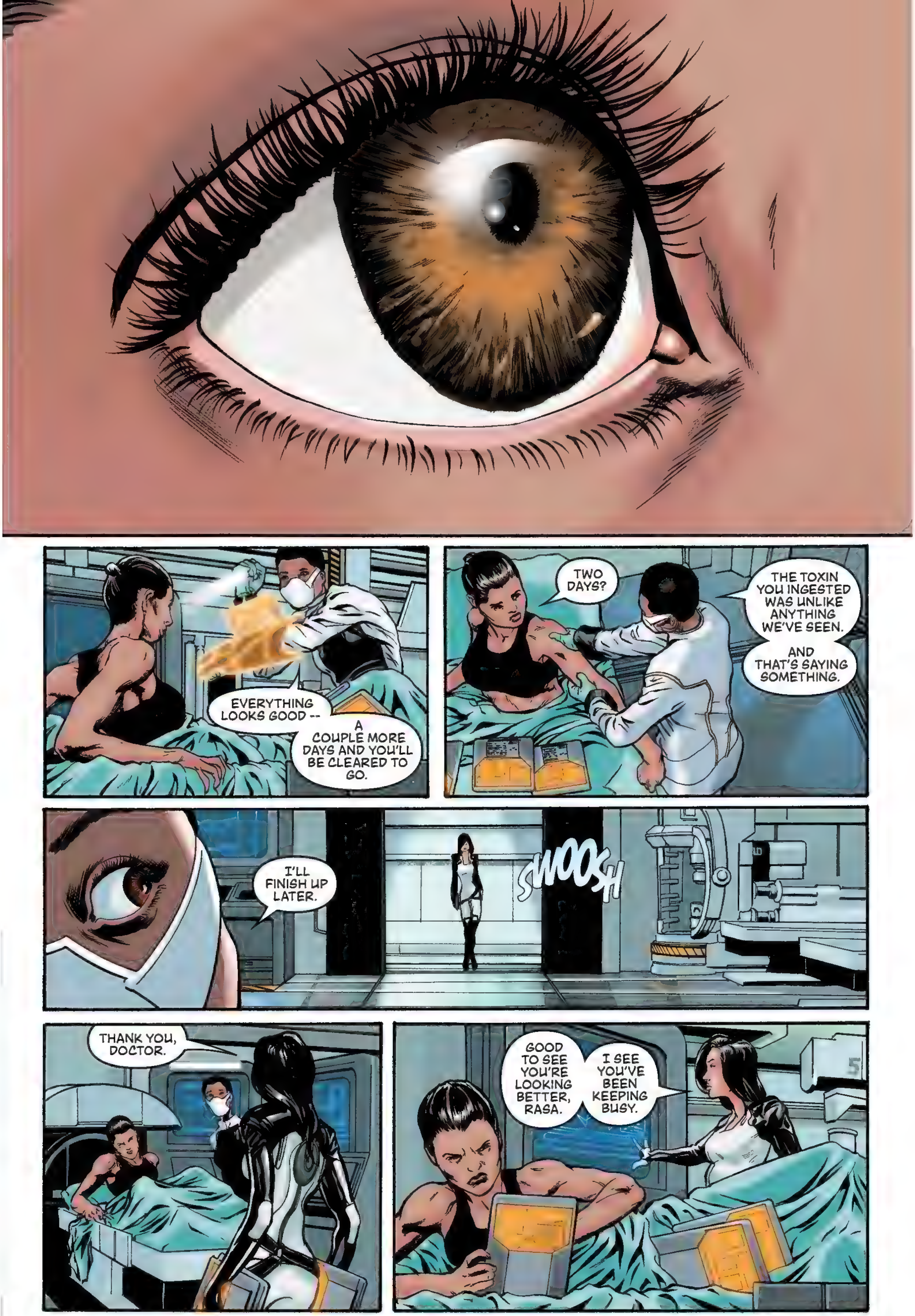

IT CAN'T END LIKE THIS --
WHY NOT?
BECAUSE, I --
I NEVER LIVED *MY* LIFE.
YOUNG WOMAN --
I BELIEVE YOU.
AND I BELIEVE THAT I WAS -- MISINFORMED OF YOUR PURPOSE.
I DO NOT SEE MURDER IN YOUR SOUL.
I APOLOGIZE FOR THE SICKNESS YOU ARE ABOUT TO EXPERIENCE, BUT IT WILL WEAR OFF SOON ENOUGH.
KALAHIRA, GUIDE HER THROUGH THE DARK AND SHOW HER HOW TO LIVE *HER* LIFE.

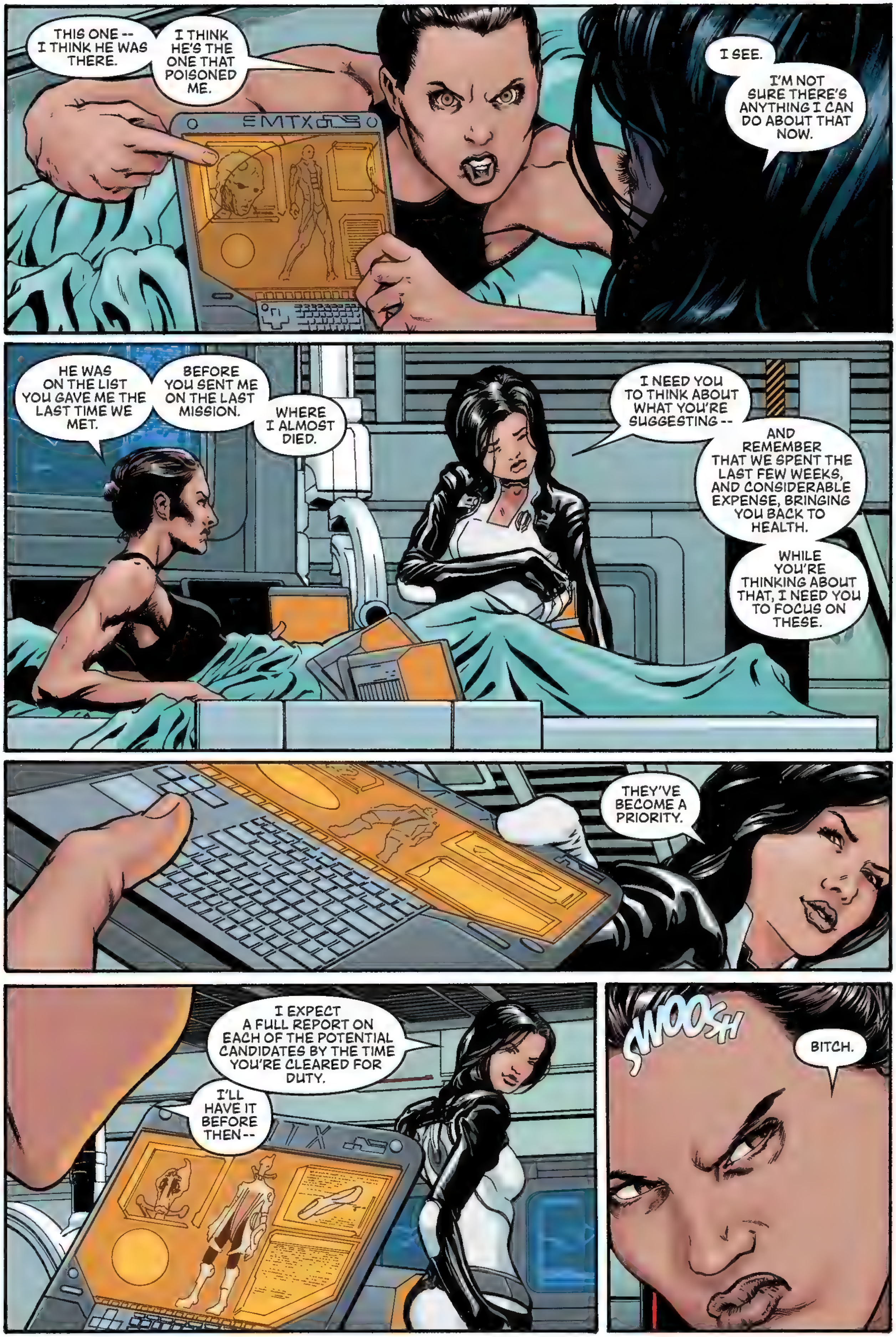

YOU BETTER HOPE WE NEVER GO ON A MISSION TOGETHER AGAIN.
YOU'VE IMPRESSED US SO FAR, RASA --
MAKE SURE IT STAYS THAT WAY.
THERE'S ALWAYS A CHOICE.
JUST BE SURE YOU MAKE THE RIGHT ONE.
GOOD LUCK, BOY.

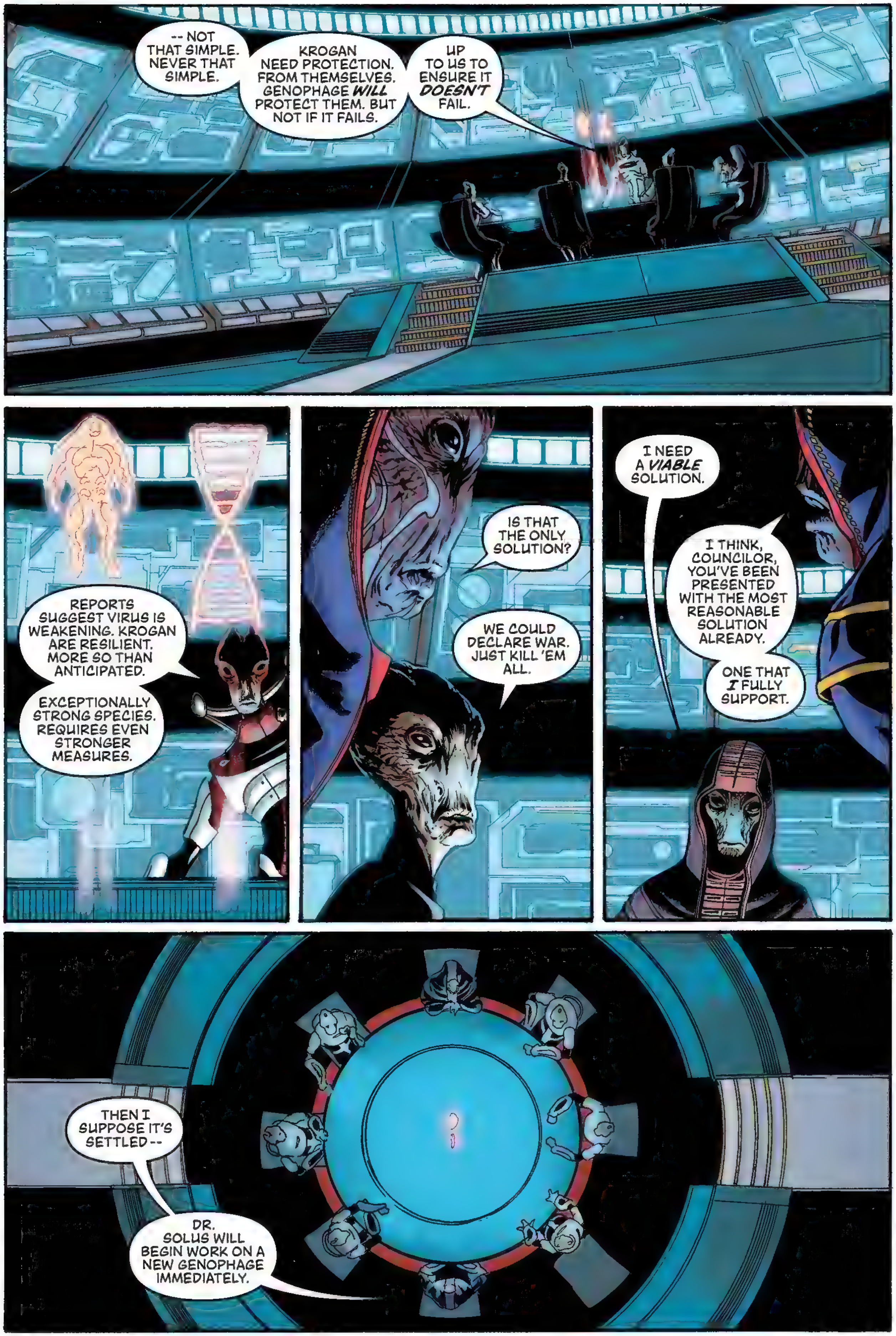

SOME DAYS LATER, BACK ON THE MINUTEMAN STATION.
RASA. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
RASA?
GET HER TO MED LAB IMMEDIATELY. RUN A FULL TOX SCREEN.
YES, MA'AM.
THERE WE GO.
GOOD WORK, RASA--
WAIT-- THE DATA--
IT'S OKAY, I'VE GOT IT.
BUT IT'S BAD --
FOCUS ON GETTING WELL.
NO, YOU'LL BE FINE. JUST GET SOME REST.

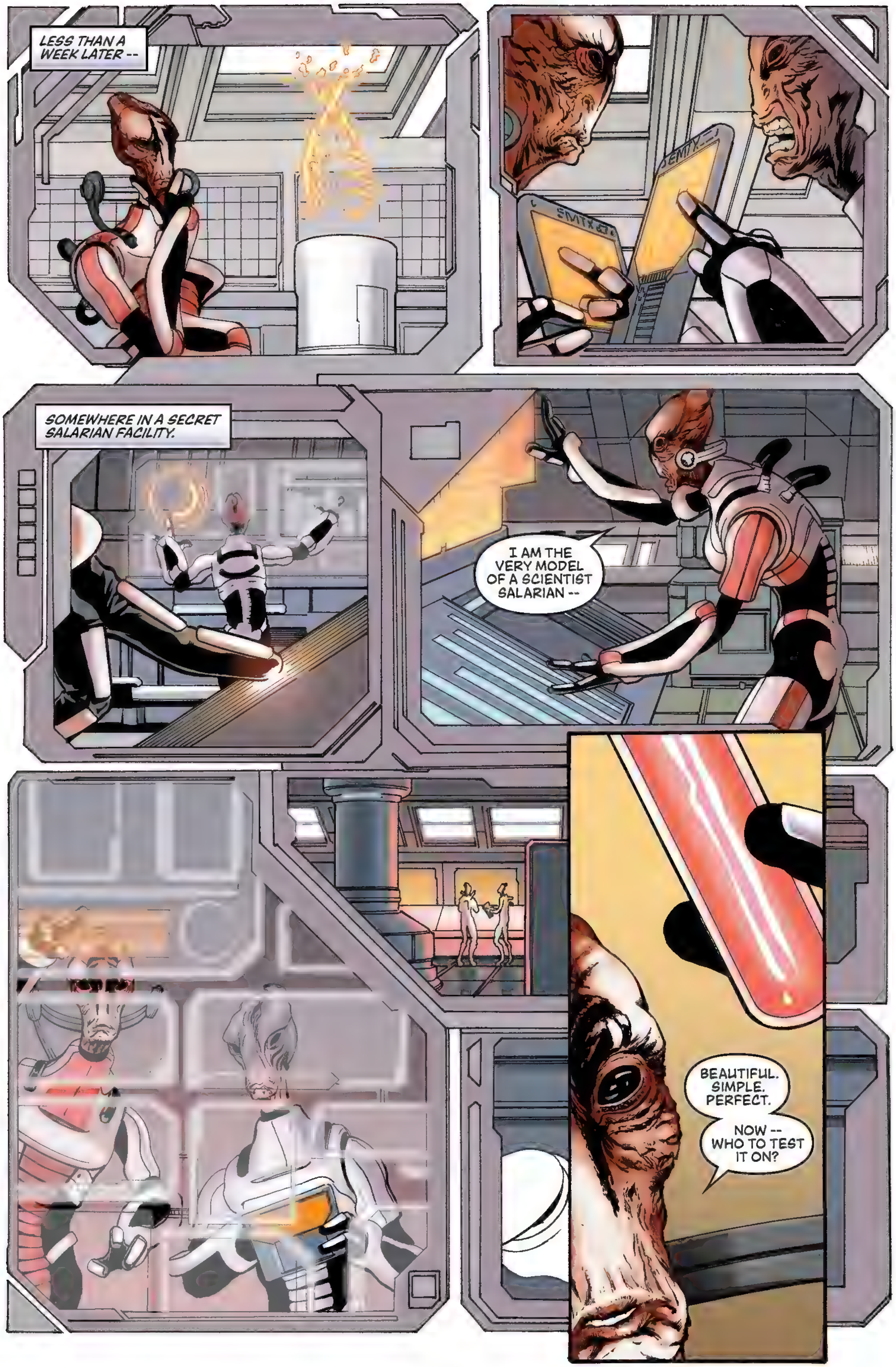

A FEW DAYS LATER, IN AN UNDISCLOSED LOCATION.
THE INTEL WAS COMPLETE?
ALMOST.
BUT I WAS ABLE TO EXTRACT THE REMAINDER WHEN THEY ATTEMPTED TO ACTIVATE THEIR VIRUS.
GOOD.
I EVEN FOUND SOME EXTRA CREDITS TO BOOST THE LAZARUS FUNDING WHILE I WAS AT IT.
IF THEY WEREN'T SUSPICIOUS ABOUT OUR INTEREST IN SHEPARD BEFORE, THEY WILL BE NOW.
LAZARUS NEEDS TO BE A SUCCESS, AGENT LAWSON.

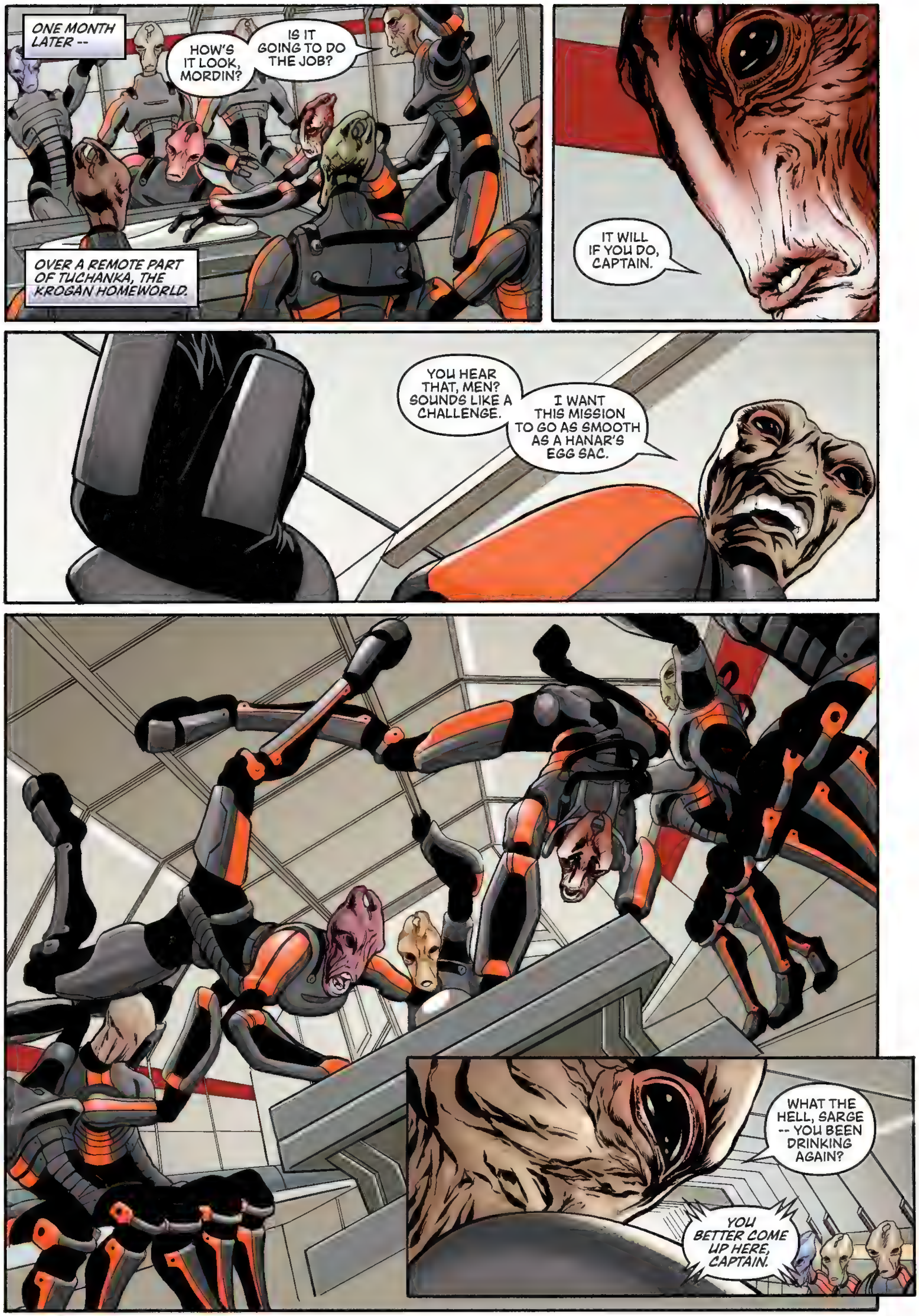

I ASSUME THE CLONE PROJECT IS NO LONGER A PRIORITY?
YOU MAY CONTINUE TO USE THE CLONE FOR TESTING, BUT I WANT ***SHEPARD.***
AND AGENT RASA?
WHAT ABOUT HER?
ASIDE FROM THE FACT ***SOMEONE*** TRIED TO KILL HER?
YES, THAT WAS TROUBLING.
I ASSUME SHE'LL SURVIVE.
YES.
BUT HER COVER'S BLOWN. THE SPECTRE MADE SURE OF THAT. SHE'LL NEVER WORK IN THE FIELD AGAIN.
WE ANTICIPATED AS MUCH.
BUT DON'T WORRY. I HAVE A PURPOSE FOR HER.
SHEPARD WILL NEED A TEAM. AND I WANT TO MAKE SURE WE GET THE VERY BEST FOR THE COMMANDER --

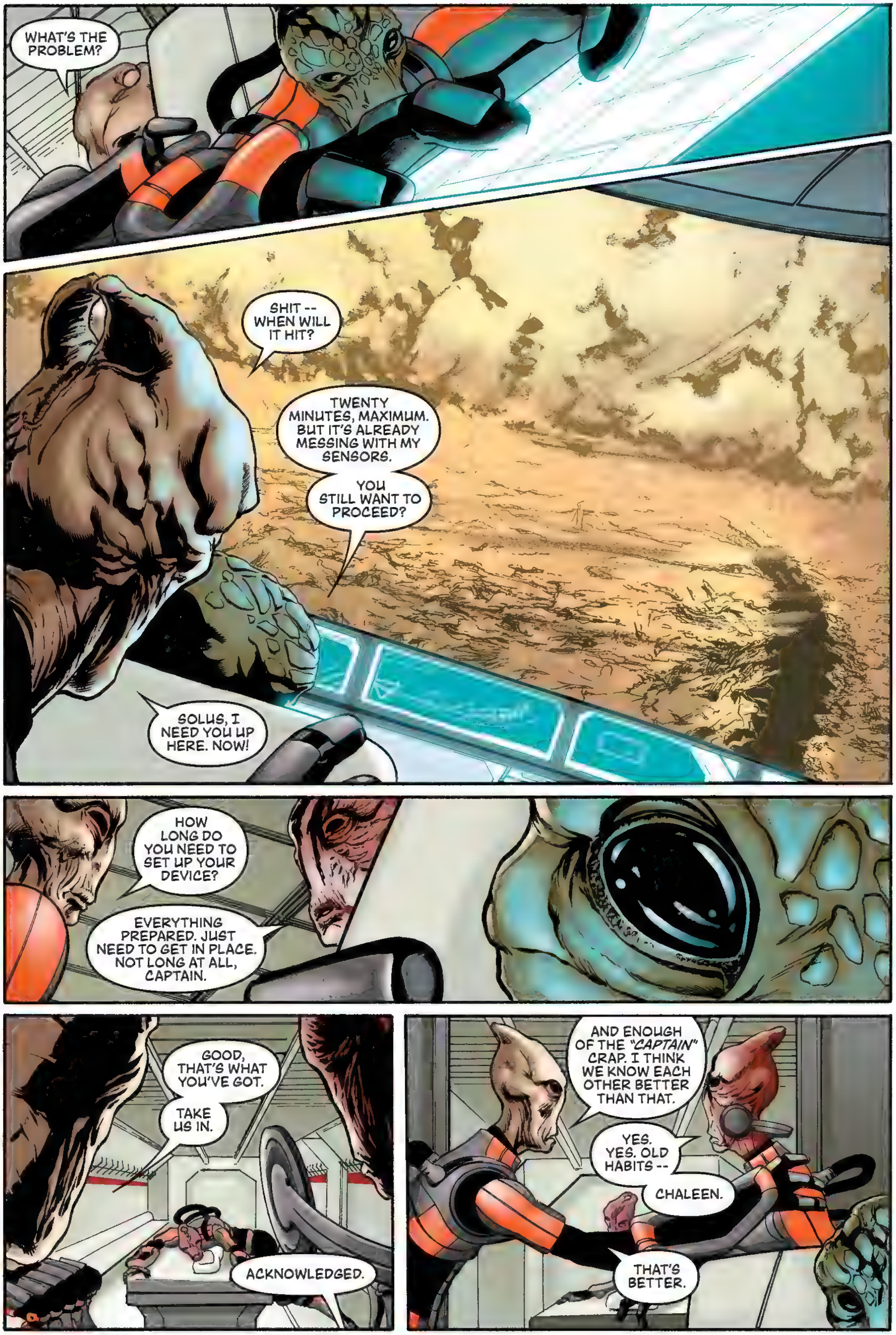

EVERYTHING LOOKS GOOD --
A COUPLE MORE DAYS AND YOU'LL BE CLEARED TO GO.
TWO DAYS?
THE TOXIN YOU INGESTED WAS UNLIKE ANYTHING WE'VE SEEN.
AND THAT'S SAYING SOMETHING.
I'LL FINISH UP LATER.
SWOOSH
THANK YOU, DOCTOR.
GOOD TO SEE YOU'RE LOOKING BETTER, RASA.
I SEE YOU'VE BEEN KEEPING BUSY.

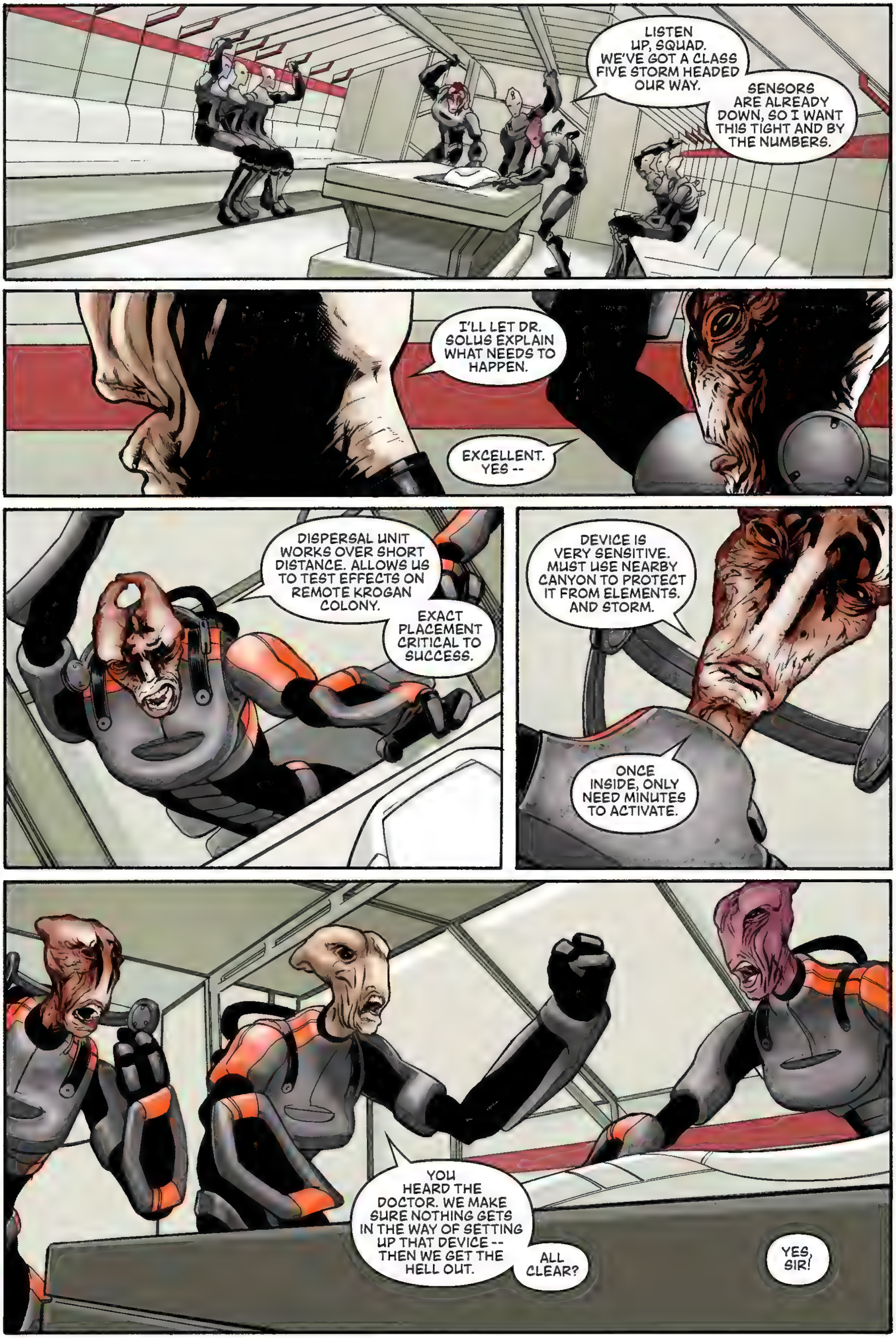

THIS ONE -- I THINK HE WAS THERE.
I THINK HE'S THE ONE THAT POISONED ME.
EMTX
I SEE.
I'M NOT SURE THERE'S ANYTHING I CAN DO ABOUT THAT NOW.
HE WAS ON THE LIST YOU GAVE ME THE LAST TIME WE MET.
BEFORE YOU SENT ME ON THE LAST MISSION.
WHERE I ALMOST DIED.
I NEED YOU TO THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE SUGGESTING --
AND REMEMBER THAT WE SPENT THE LAST FEW WEEKS, AND CONSIDERABLE EXPENSE, BRINGING YOU BACK TO HEALTH.
WHILE YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT THAT, I NEED YOU TO FOCUS ON THESE.
THEY'VE BECOME A PRIORITY.
I EXPECT A FULL REPORT ON EACH OF THE POTENTIAL CANDIDATES BY THE TIME YOU'RE CLEARED FOR DUTY.
I'LL HAVE IT BEFORE THEN --
SWOOSH
BITCH.

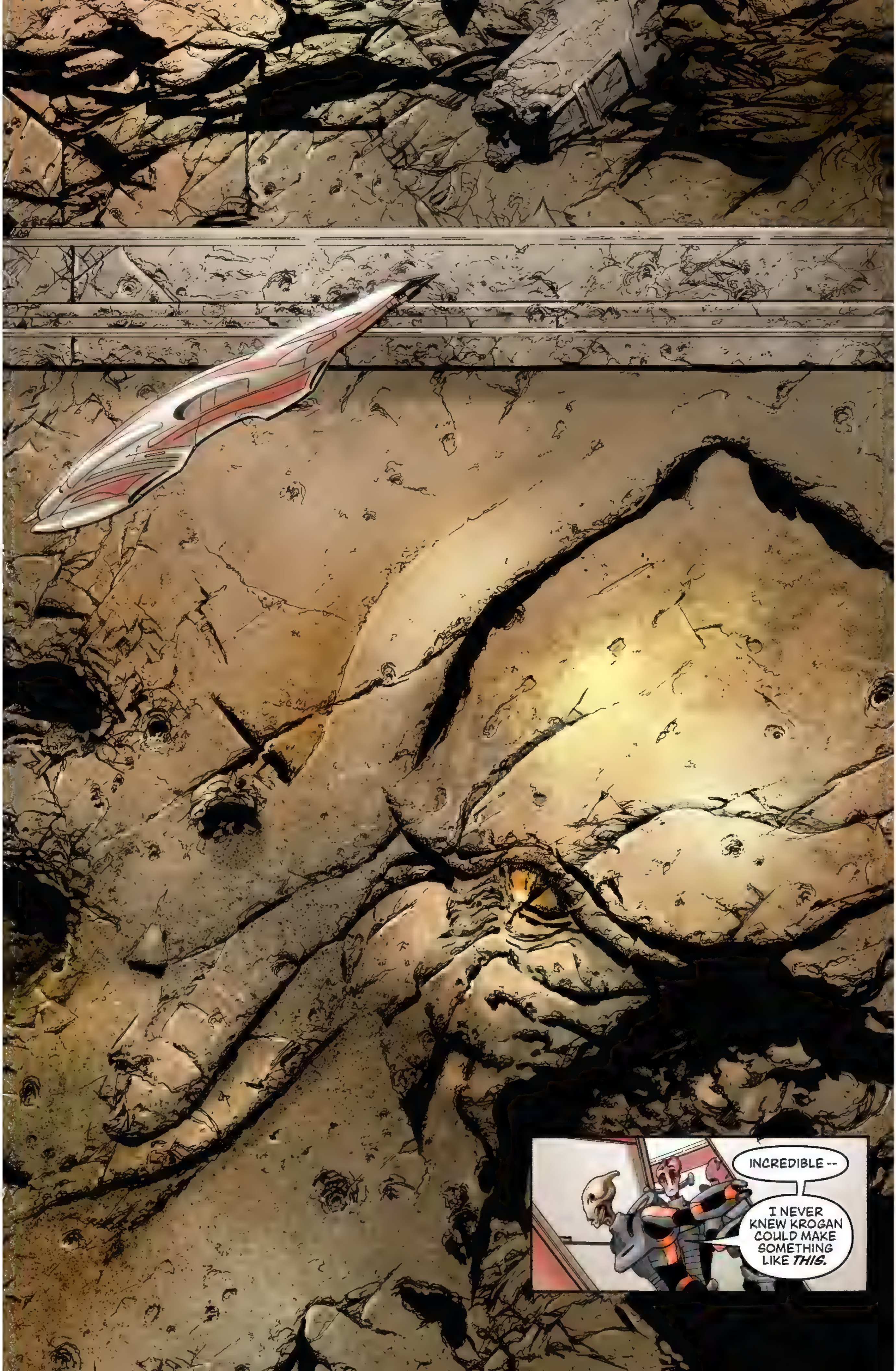

-- NOT THAT SIMPLE. NEVER THAT SIMPLE.
KROGAN NEED PROTECTION. FROM THEMSELVES. GENOPHAGE *WILL* PROTECT THEM. BUT NOT IF IT FAILS.
UP TO US TO ENSURE IT *DOESN'T* FAIL.
REPORTS SUGGEST VIRUS IS WEAKENING. KROGAN ARE RESILIENT. MORE SO THAN ANTICIPATED.
EXCEPTIONALLY STRONG SPECIES. REQUIRES EVEN STRONGER MEASURES.
IS THAT THE ONLY SOLUTION?
WE COULD DECLARE WAR. JUST KILL 'EM ALL.
I NEED A *VIABLE* SOLUTION.
I THINK, COUNCILOR, YOU'VE BEEN PRESENTED WITH THE MOST REASONABLE SOLUTION ALREADY.
ONE THAT *I* FULLY SUPPORT.
THEN I SUPPOSE IT'S SETTLED --
DR. SOLUS WILL BEGIN WORK ON A NEW GENOPHAGE IMMEDIATELY.

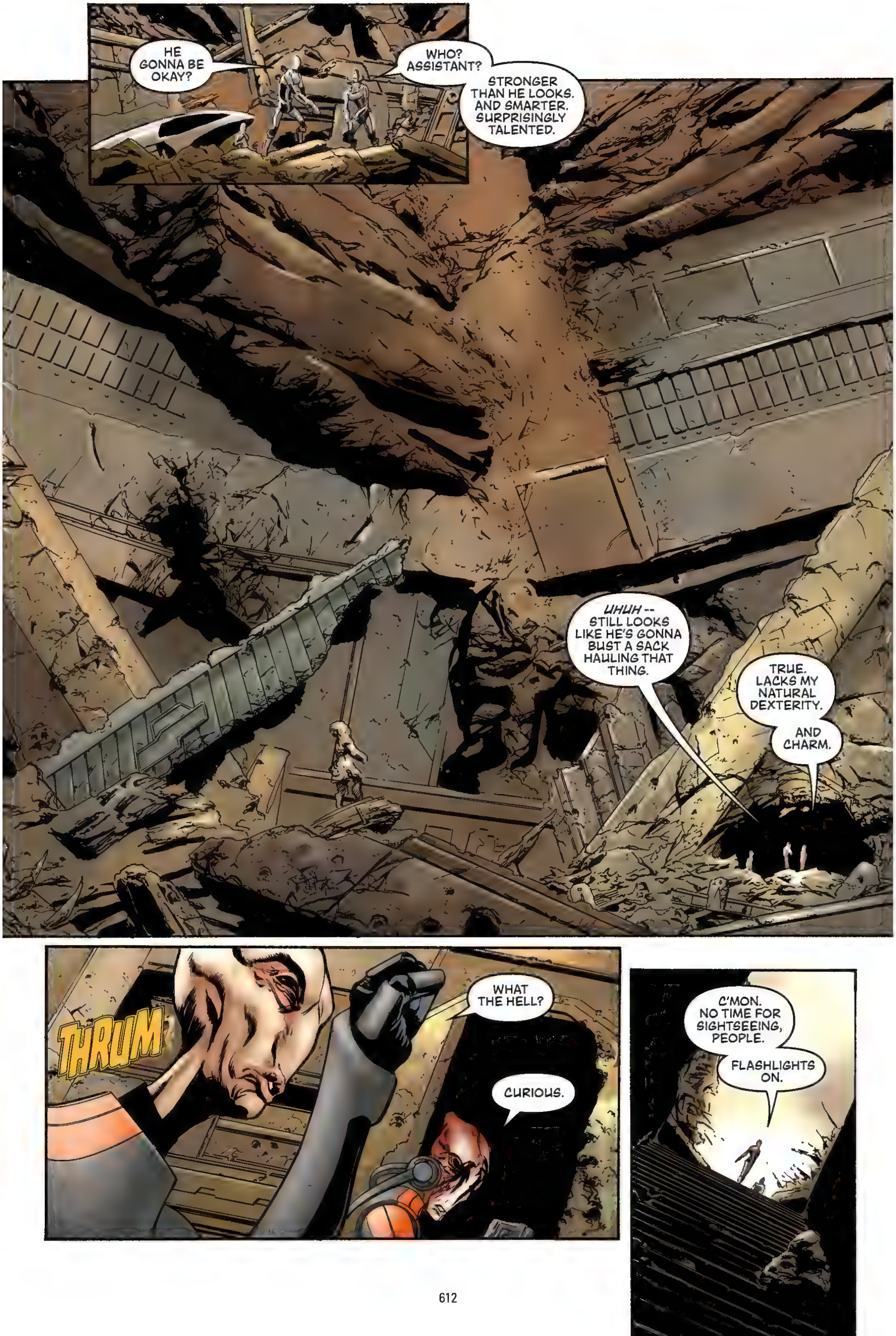

LESS THAN A WEEK LATER --
SOMEWHERE IN A SECRET SALARIAN FACILITY.
I AM THE VERY MODEL OF A SCIENTIST SALARIAN --
BEAUTIFUL. SIMPLE. PERFECT.
NOW -- WHO TO TEST IT ON?

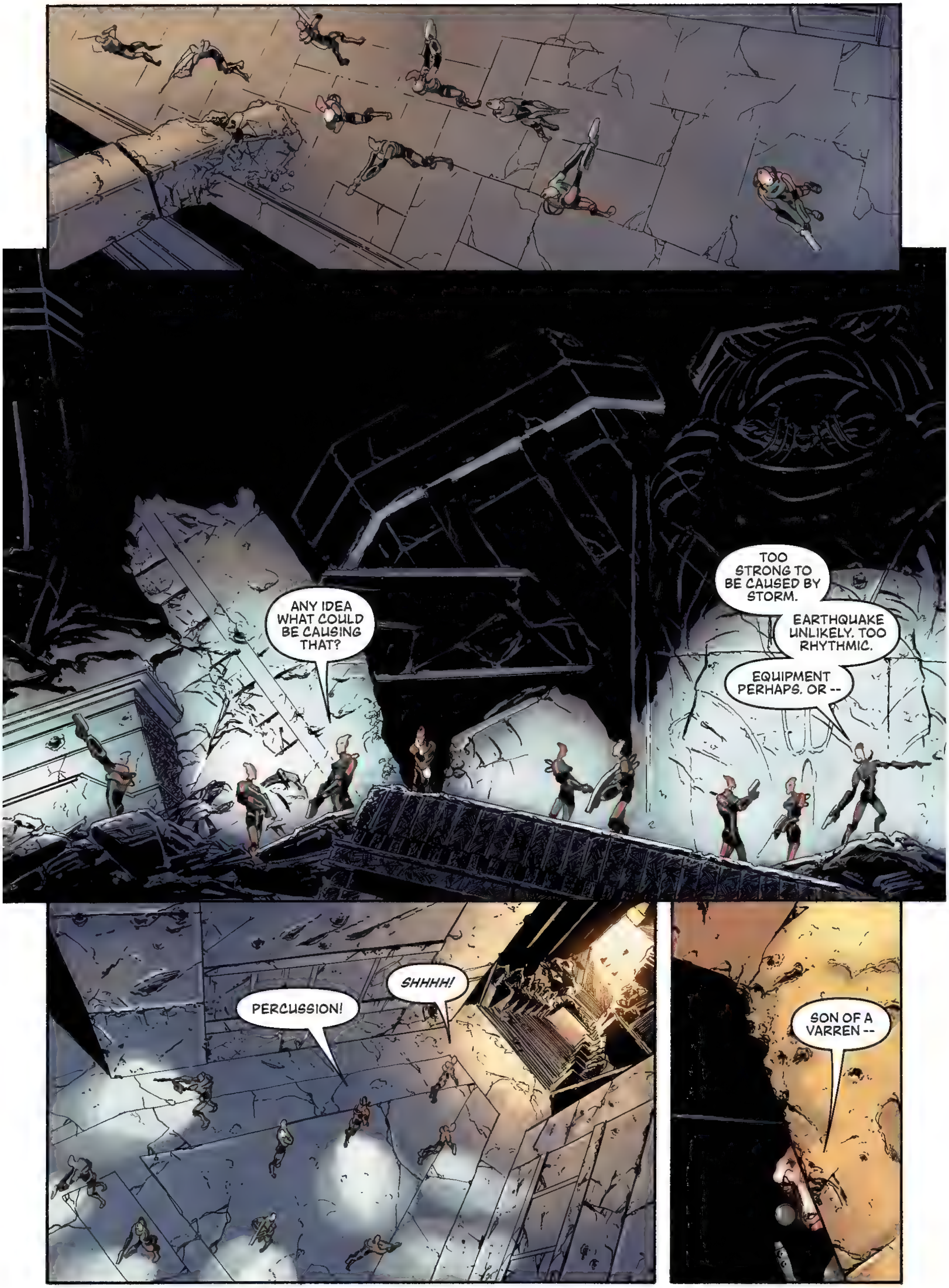

ONE MONTH LATER --
OVER A REMOTE PART OF TUCHANKA, THE KROGAN HOMEWORLD.
HOW'S IT LOOK, MORDIN?
IS IT GOING TO DO THE JOB?
IT WILL IF YOU DO, CAPTAIN.
YOU HEAR THAT, MEN? SOUNDS LIKE A CHALLENGE.
I WANT THIS MISSION TO GO AS SMOOTH AS A HANAR'S EGG SAC.
WHAT THE HELL, SARGE -- YOU BEEN DRINKING AGAIN?
YOU BETTER COME UP HERE, CAPTAIN.

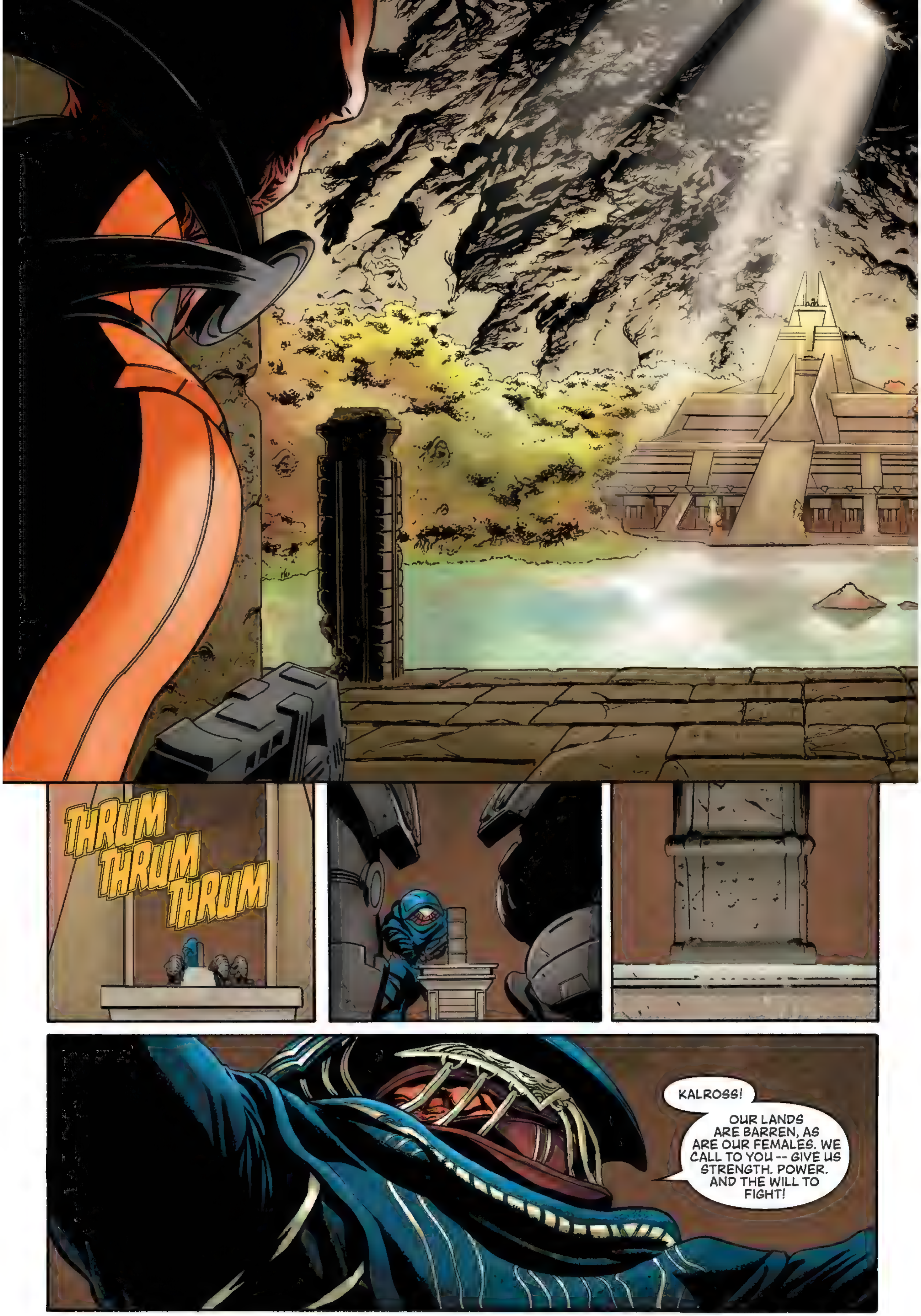

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?
SHIT -- WHEN WILL IT HIT?
TWENTY MINUTES, MAXIMUM. BUT IT'S ALREADY MESSING WITH MY SENSORS.
YOU STILL WANT TO PROCEED?
SOLUS, I NEED YOU UP HERE. NOW!
HOW LONG DO YOU NEED TO SET UP YOUR DEVICE?
EVERYTHING PREPARED. JUST NEED TO GET IN PLACE. NOT LONG AT ALL, CAPTAIN.
GOOD, THAT'S WHAT YOU'VE GOT.
TAKE US IN.
ACKNOWLEDGED.
AND ENOUGH OF THE *"CAPTAIN"* CRAP. I THINK WE KNOW EACH OTHER BETTER THAN THAT.
YES. YES. OLD HABITS --
CHALEEN.
THAT'S BETTER.

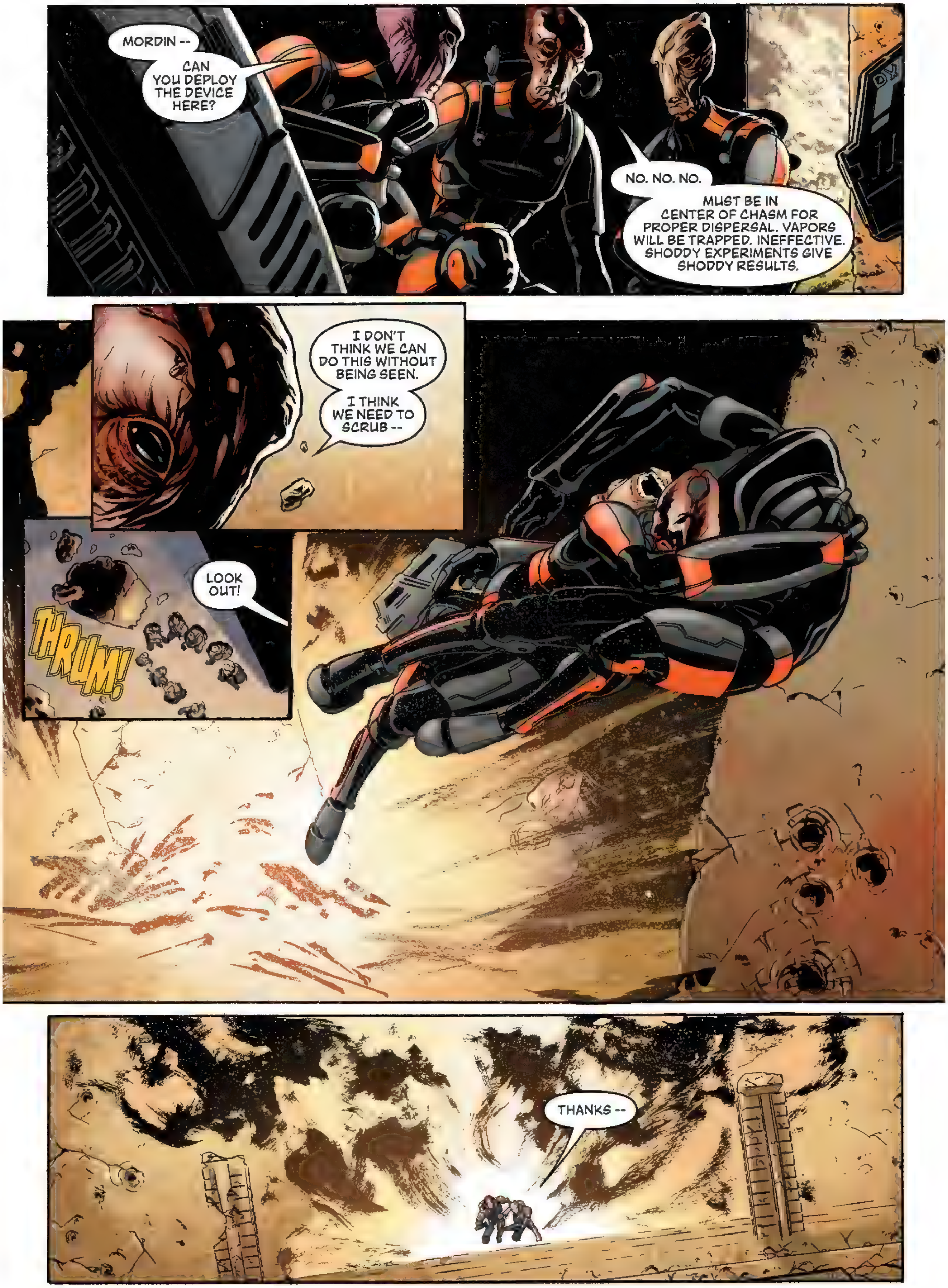

LISTEN UP, SQUAD. WE'VE GOT A CLASS FIVE STORM HEADED OUR WAY.
SENSORS ARE ALREADY DOWN, SO I WANT THIS TIGHT AND BY THE NUMBERS.
I'LL LET DR. SOLUS EXPLAIN WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN.
EXCELLENT. YES --
DISPERSAL UNIT WORKS OVER SHORT DISTANCE. ALLOWS US TO TEST EFFECTS ON REMOTE KROGAN COLONY.
EXACT PLACEMENT CRITICAL TO SUCCESS.
DEVICE IS VERY SENSITIVE. MUST USE NEARBY CANYON TO PROTECT IT FROM ELEMENTS. AND STORM.
ONCE INSIDE, ONLY NEED MINUTES TO ACTIVATE.
YOU HEARD THE DOCTOR. WE MAKE SURE NOTHING GETS IN THE WAY OF SETTING UP THAT DEVICE -- THEN WE GET THE HELL OUT.
ALL CLEAR?
YES, SIR!

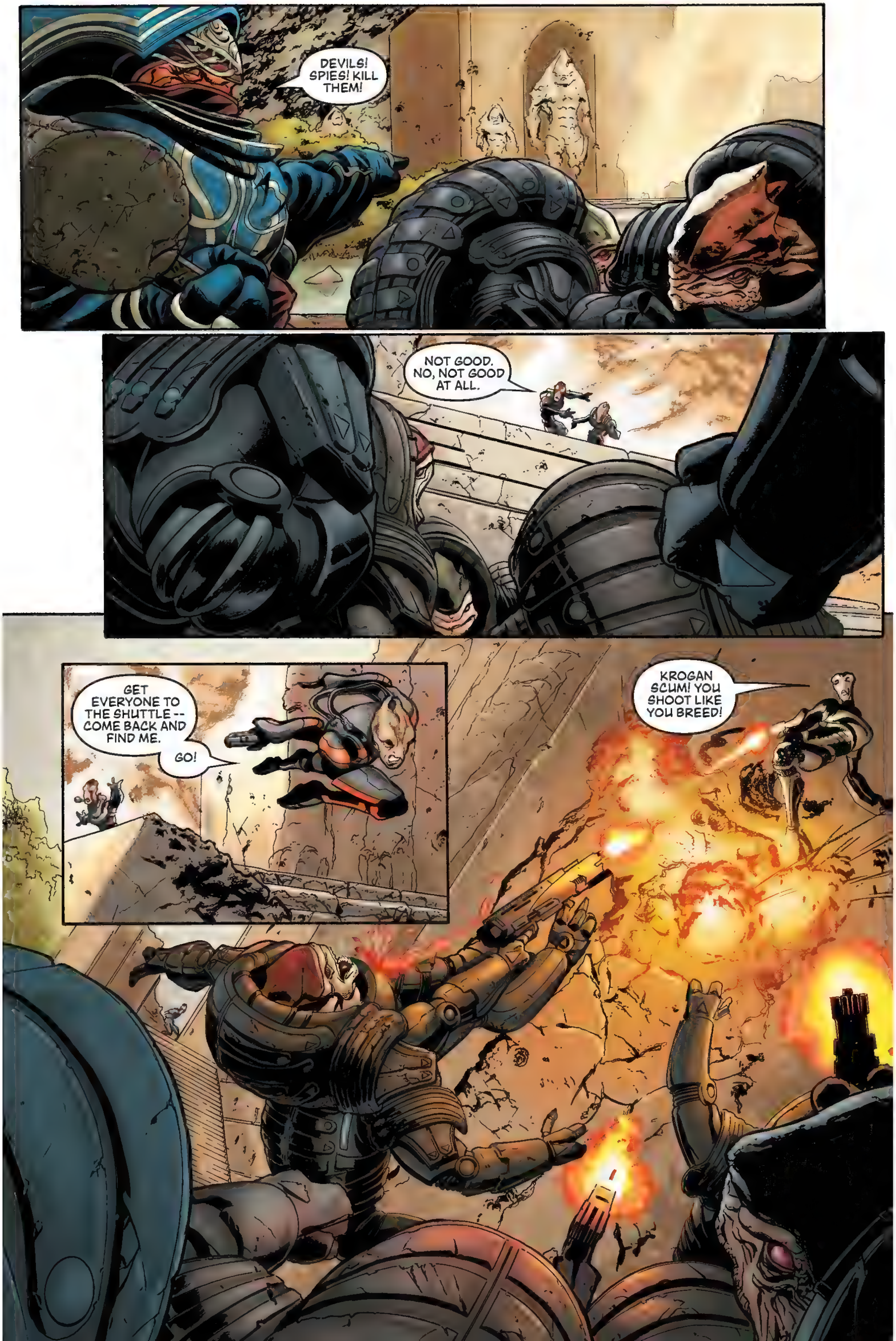

INCREDIBLE --
I NEVER KNEW KROGAN COULD MAKE SOMETHING LIKE *THIS.*

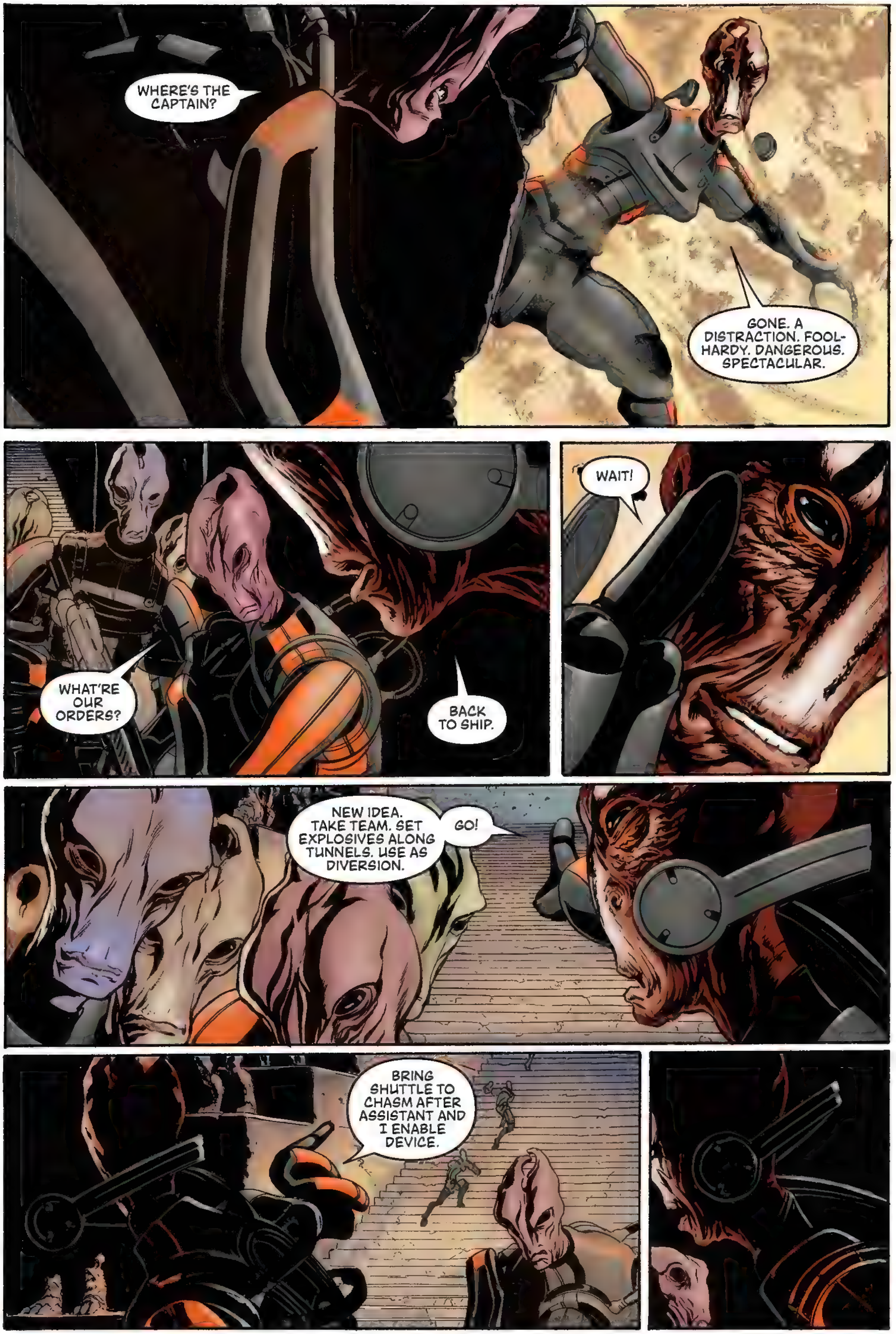

HE GONNA BE OKAY?
WHO? ASSISTANT?
STRONGER THAN HE LOOKS. AND SMARTER. SURPRISINGLY TALENTED.
UHUH -- STILL LOOKS LIKE HE'S GONNA BUST A SACK HAULING THAT THING.
TRUE. LACKS MY NATURAL DEXTERITY.
AND CHARM.
THRUM
WHAT THE HELL?
CURIOUS.
C'MON. NO TIME FOR SIGHTSEEING, PEOPLE.
FLASHLIGHTS ON.

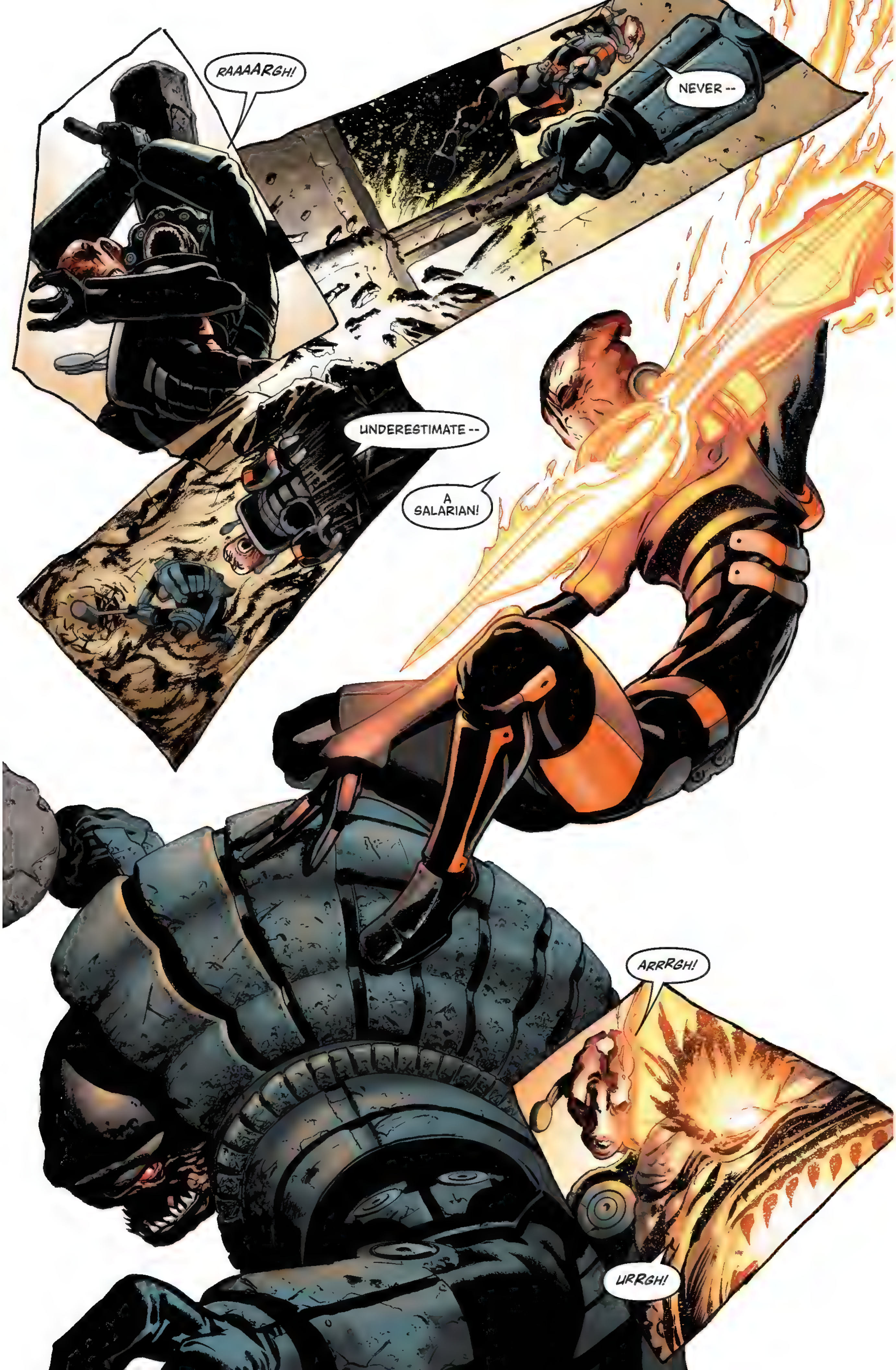

ANY IDEA WHAT COULD BE CAUSING THAT?
TOO STRONG TO BE CAUSED BY STORM.
EARTHQUAKE UNLIKELY. TOO RHYTHMIC.
EQUIPMENT PERHAPS. OR --
PERCUSSION!
SHHHH!
SON OF A VARREN --

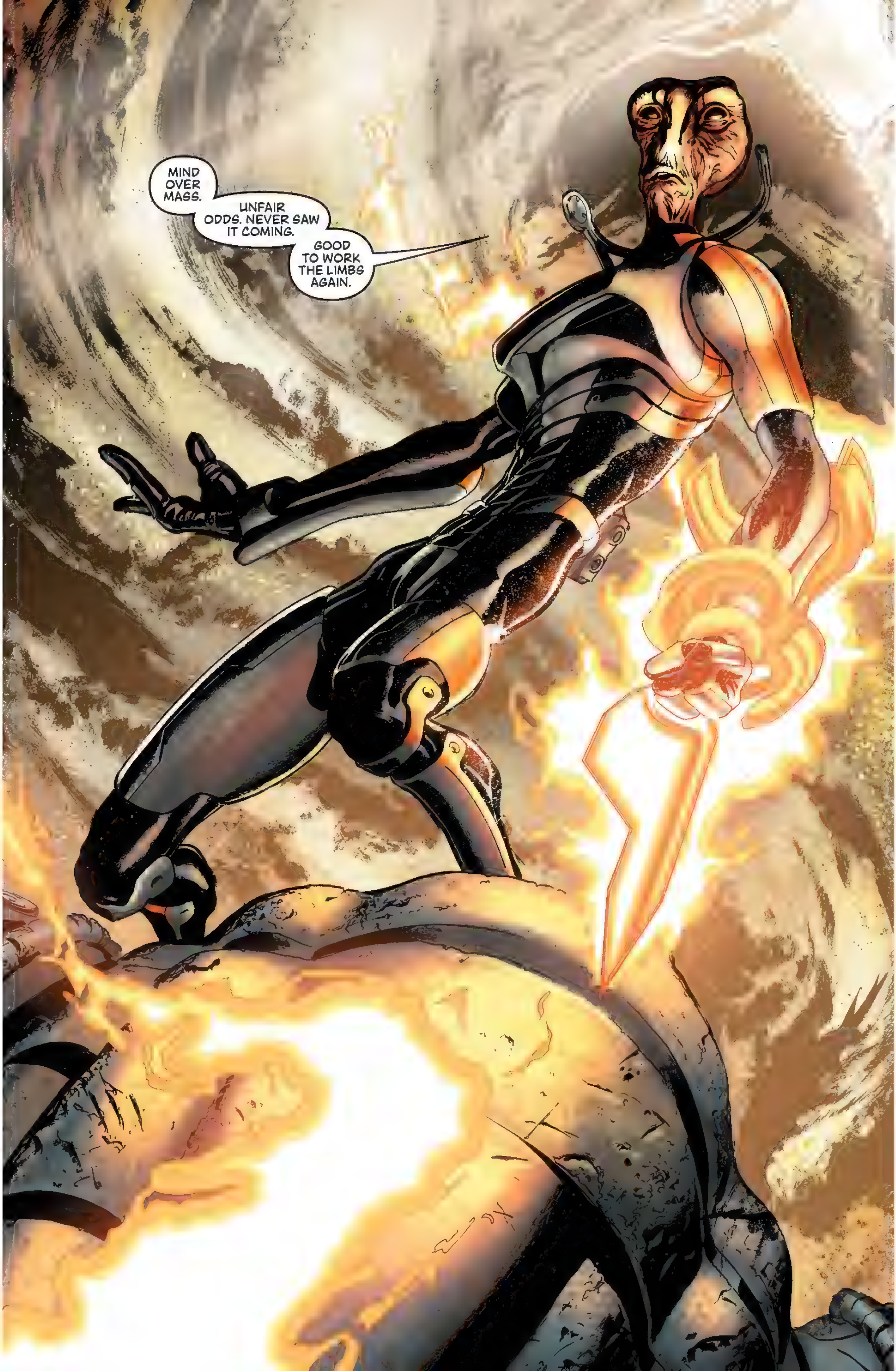

THRUM THRUM THRUM
KALROSS!
OUR LANDS ARE BARREN, AS ARE OUR FEMALES. WE CALL TO YOU -- GIVE US STRENGTH. POWER. AND THE WILL TO FIGHT!

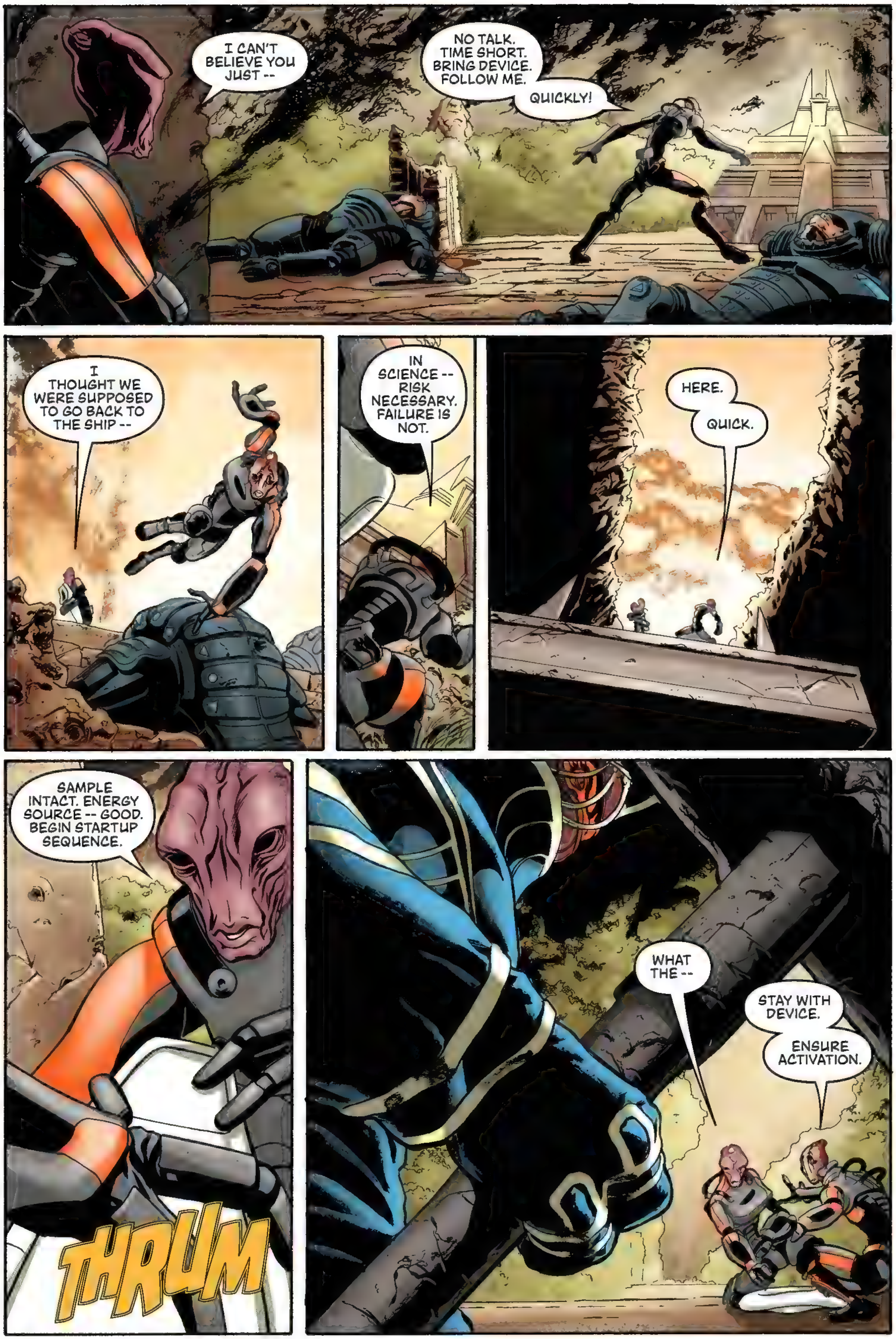

MORDIN --
CAN YOU DEPLOY THE DEVICE HERE?
NO. NO. NO.
MUST BE IN CENTER OF CHASM FOR PROPER DISPERSAL. VAPORS WILL BE TRAPPED. INEFFECTIVE. SHODDY EXPERIMENTS GIVE SHODDY RESULTS.
I DON'T THINK WE CAN DO THIS WITHOUT BEING SEEN.
I THINK WE NEED TO SCRUB --
LOOK OUT!
THRUM!
THANKS --

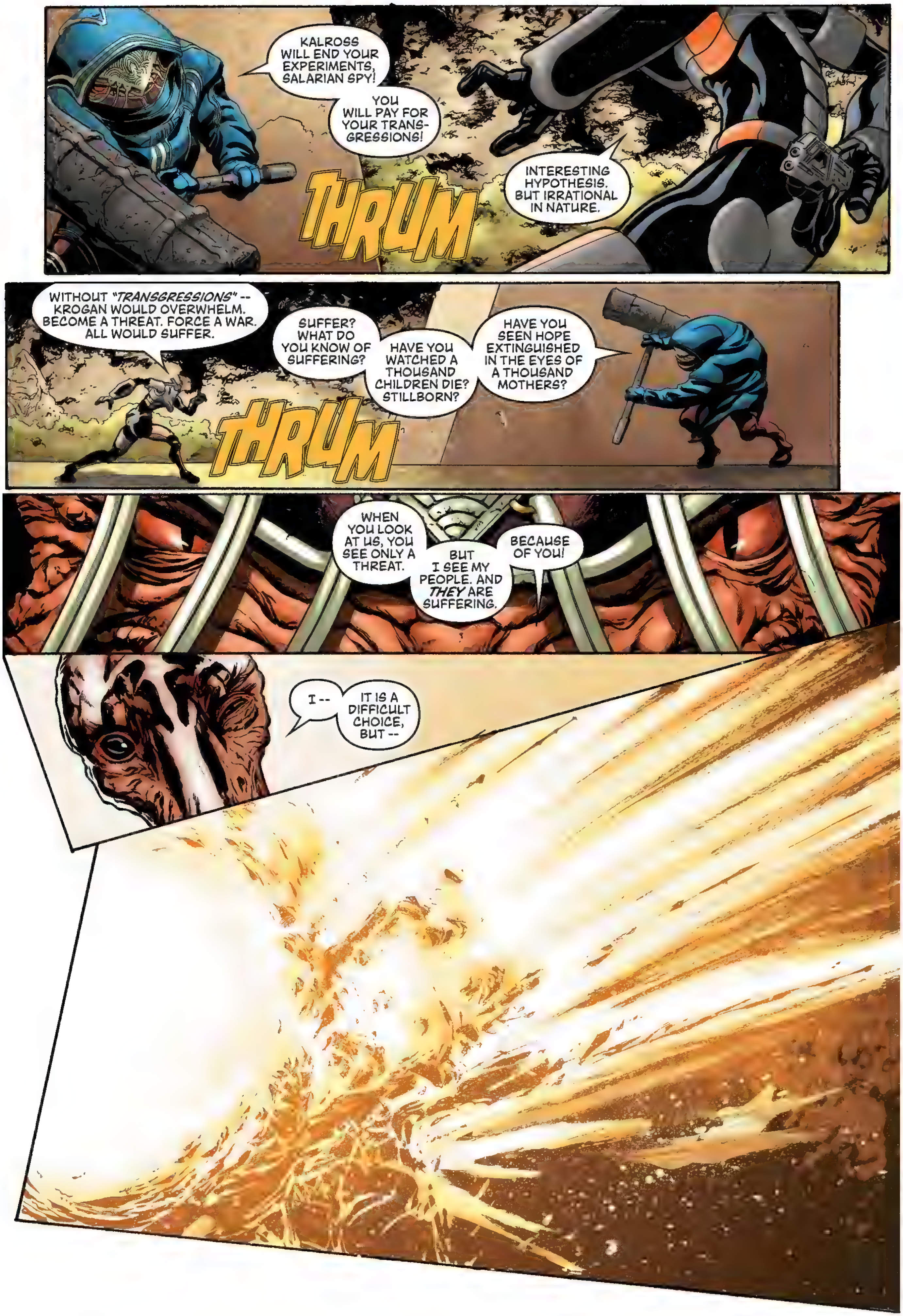

DEVILS! SPIES! KILL THEM!
NOT GOOD. NO, NOT GOOD AT ALL.
GET EVERYONE TO THE SHUTTLE -- COME BACK AND FIND ME.
GO!
KROGAN SCUM! YOU SHOOT LIKE YOU BREED!

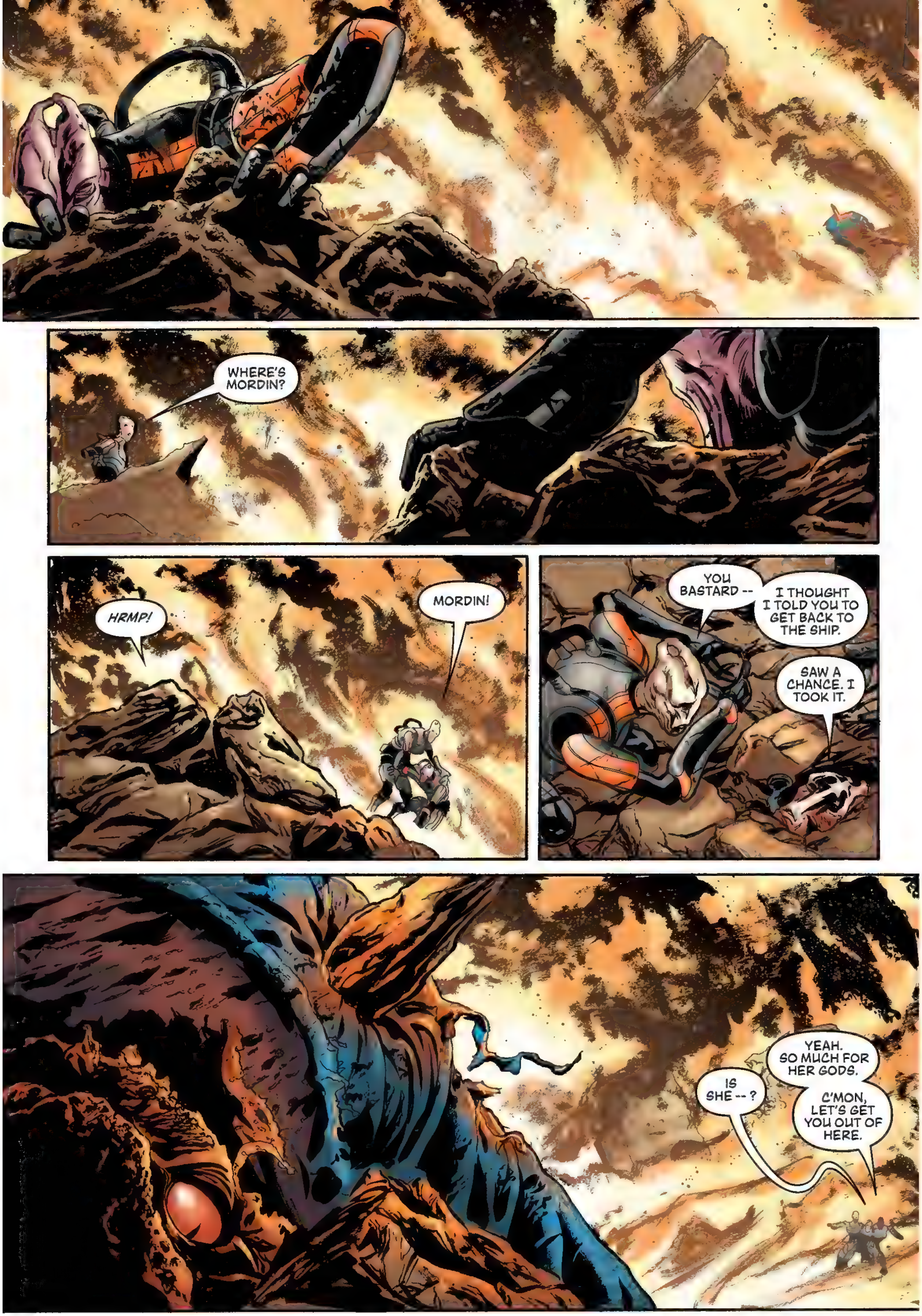

WHERE'S THE CAPTAIN?
GONE. A DISTRACTION. FOOLHARDY. DANGEROUS. SPECTACULAR.
WHAT'RE OUR ORDERS?
BACK TO SHIP.
WAIT!
NEW IDEA. TAKE TEAM. SET EXPLOSIVES ALONG TUNNELS. USE AS DIVERSION.
GO!
BRING SHUTTLE TO CHASM AFTER ASSISTANT AND I ENABLE DEVICE.

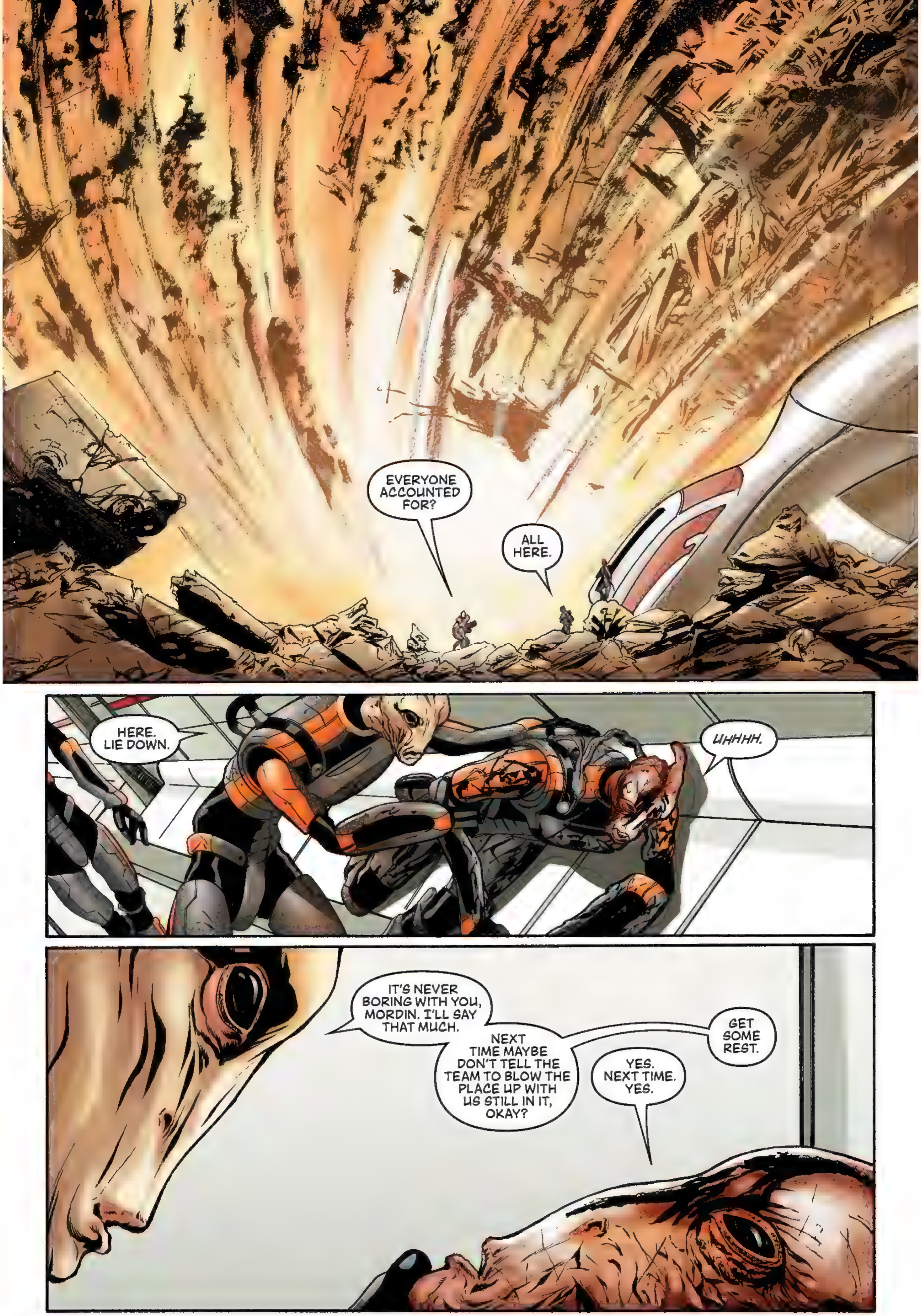

RAAAARGH!
NEVER --
UNDERESTIMATE --
A SALARIAN!
ARRRGH!
URRGH!

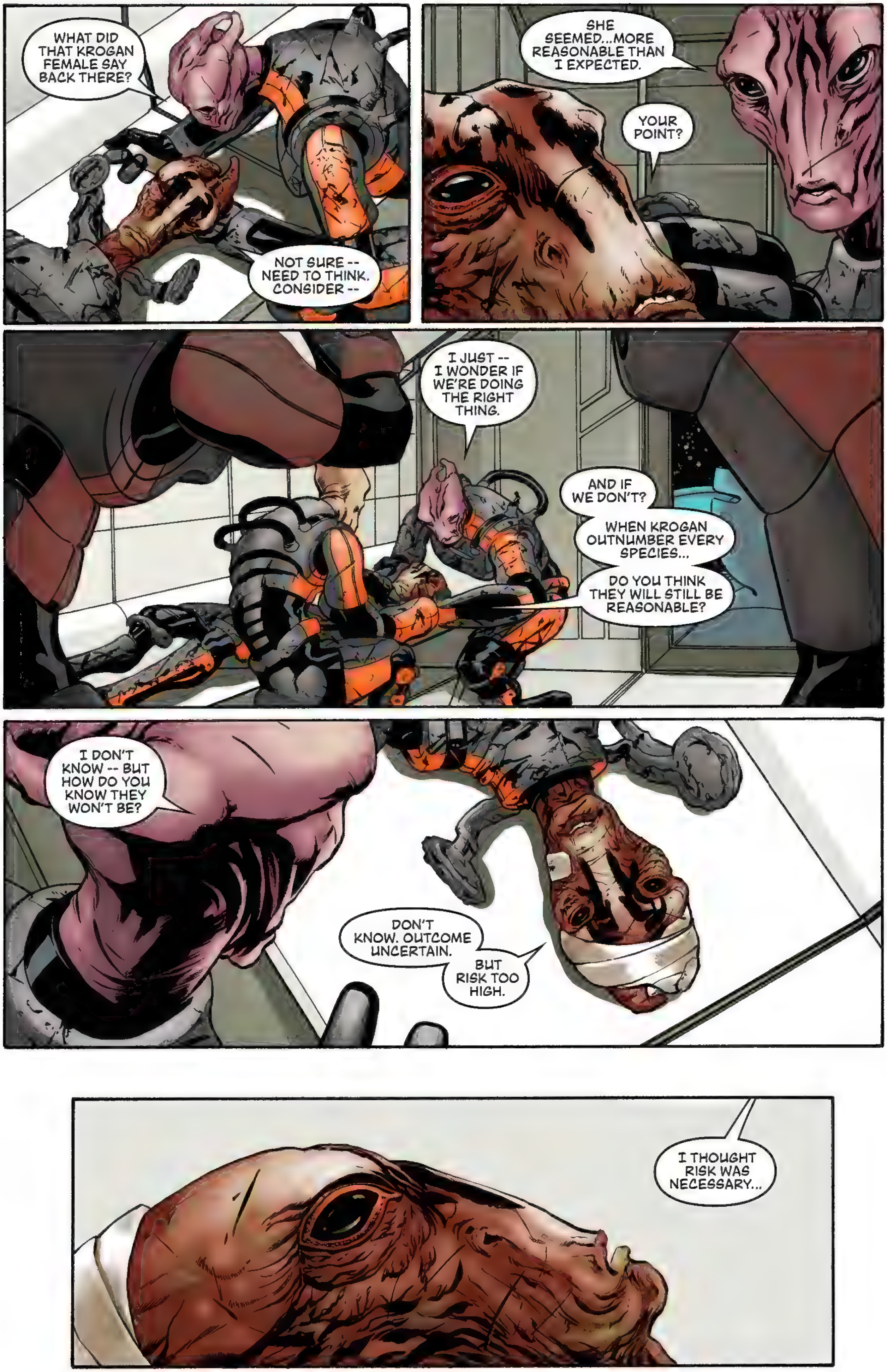

MIND OVER MASS.
UNFAIR ODDS. NEVER SAW IT COMING.
GOOD TO WORK THE LIMBS AGAIN.

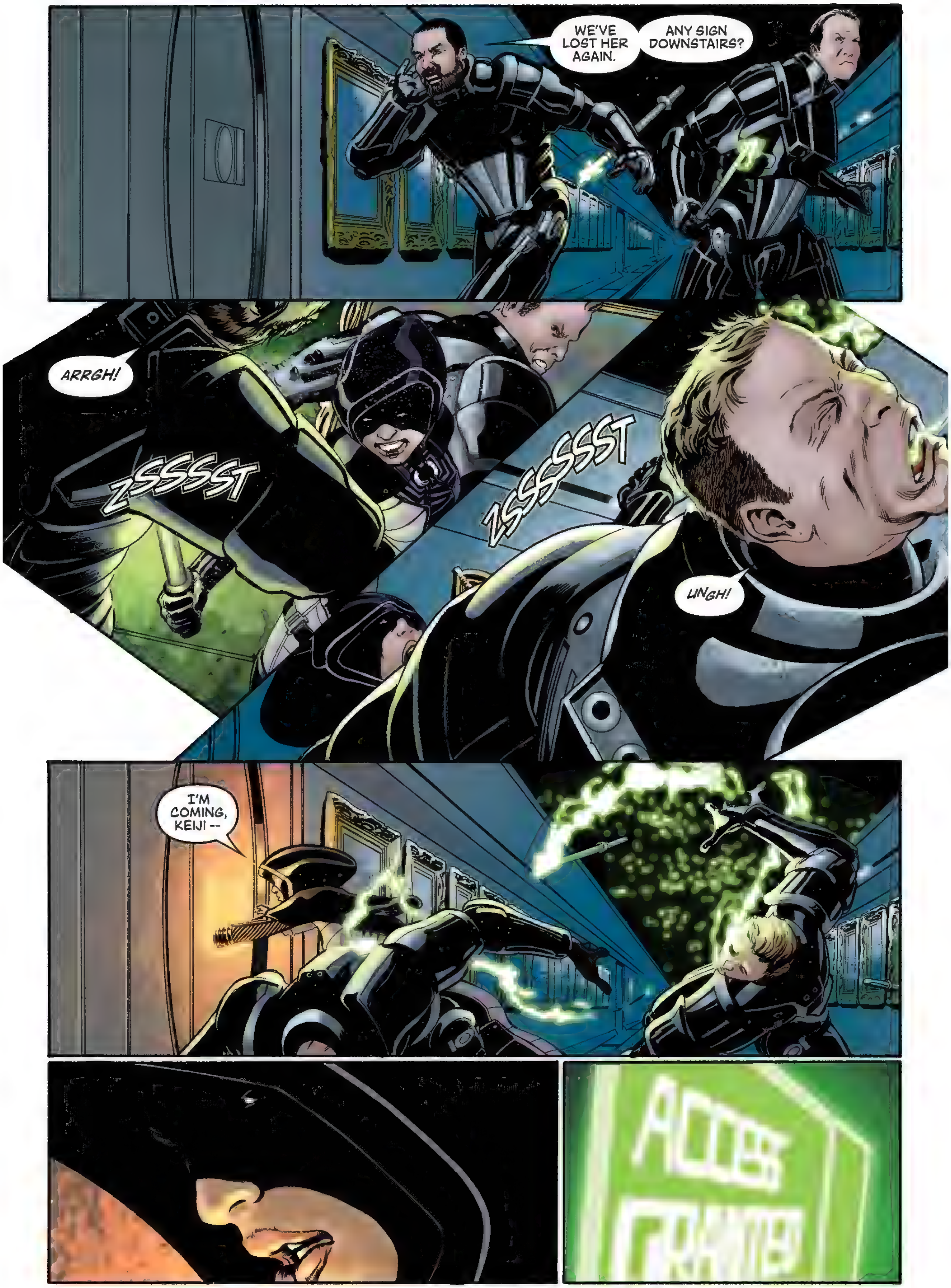

I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU JUST --
NO TALK. TIME SHORT. BRING DEVICE. FOLLOW ME.
QUICKLY!
I THOUGHT WE WERE SUPPOSED TO GO BACK TO THE SHIP --
IN SCIENCE -- RISK NECESSARY. FAILURE IS NOT.
HERE.
QUICK.
SAMPLE INTACT. ENERGY SOURCE -- GOOD. BEGIN STARTUP SEQUENCE.
THRUM
WHAT THE --
STAY WITH DEVICE.
ENSURE ACTIVATION.

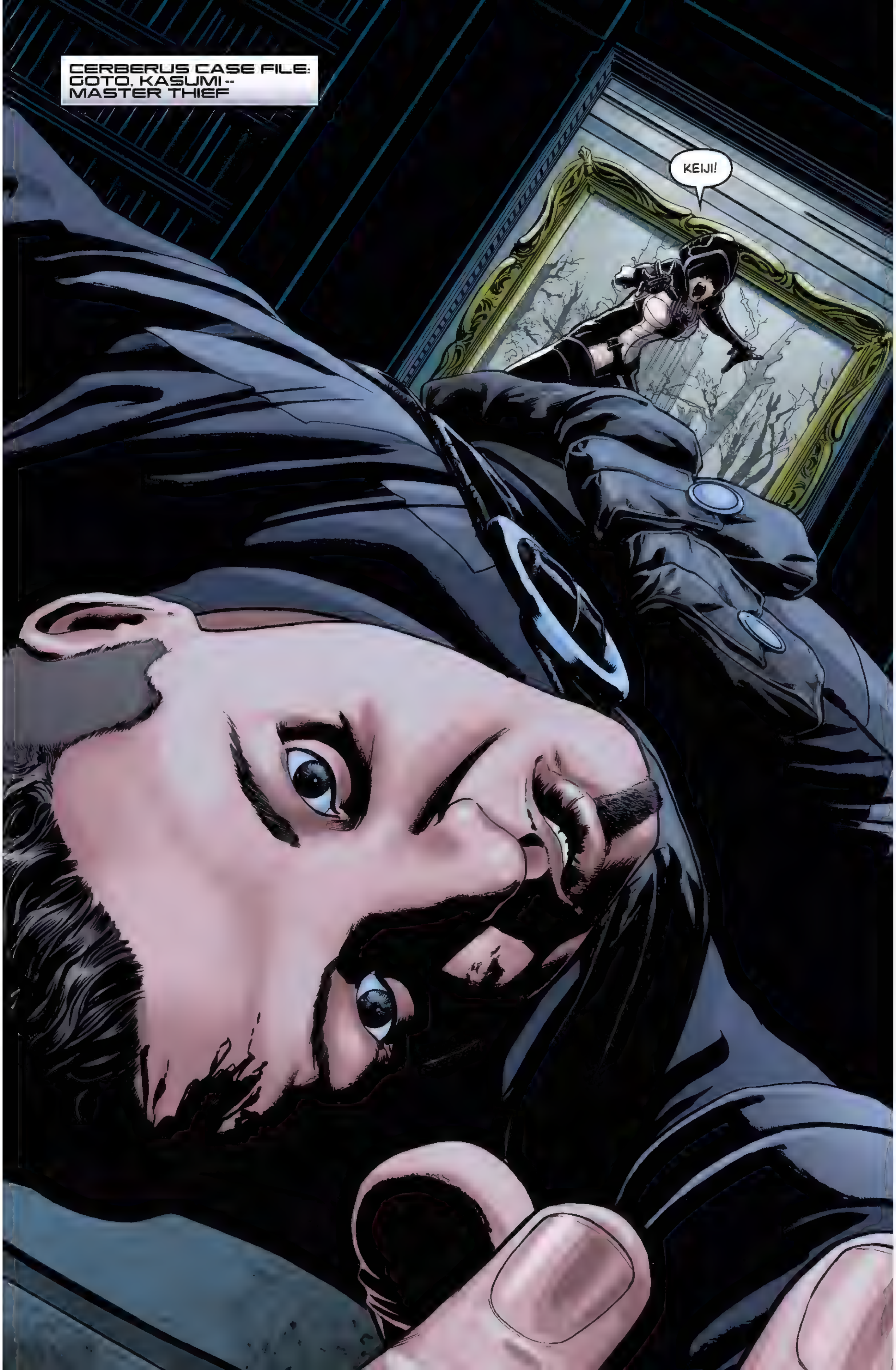

KALROSS WILL END YOUR EXPERIMENTS, SALARIAN SPY!
YOU WILL PAY FOR YOUR TRANSGRESSIONS!
THRUM
INTERESTING HYPOTHESIS. BUT IRRATIONAL IN NATURE.
WITHOUT "*TRANSGRESSIONS*" -- KROGAN WOULD OVERWHELM. BECOME A THREAT. FORCE A WAR. ALL WOULD SUFFER.
SUFFER? WHAT DO YOU KNOW OF SUFFERING?
HAVE YOU WATCHED A THOUSAND CHILDREN DIE? STILLBORN?
HAVE YOU SEEN HOPE EXTINGUISHED IN THE EYES OF A THOUSAND MOTHERS?
THRUM
WHEN YOU LOOK AT US, YOU SEE ONLY A THREAT.
BUT I SEE MY PEOPLE. AND *THEY* ARE SUFFERING.
BECAUSE OF YOU!
I --
IT IS A DIFFICULT CHOICE, BUT --

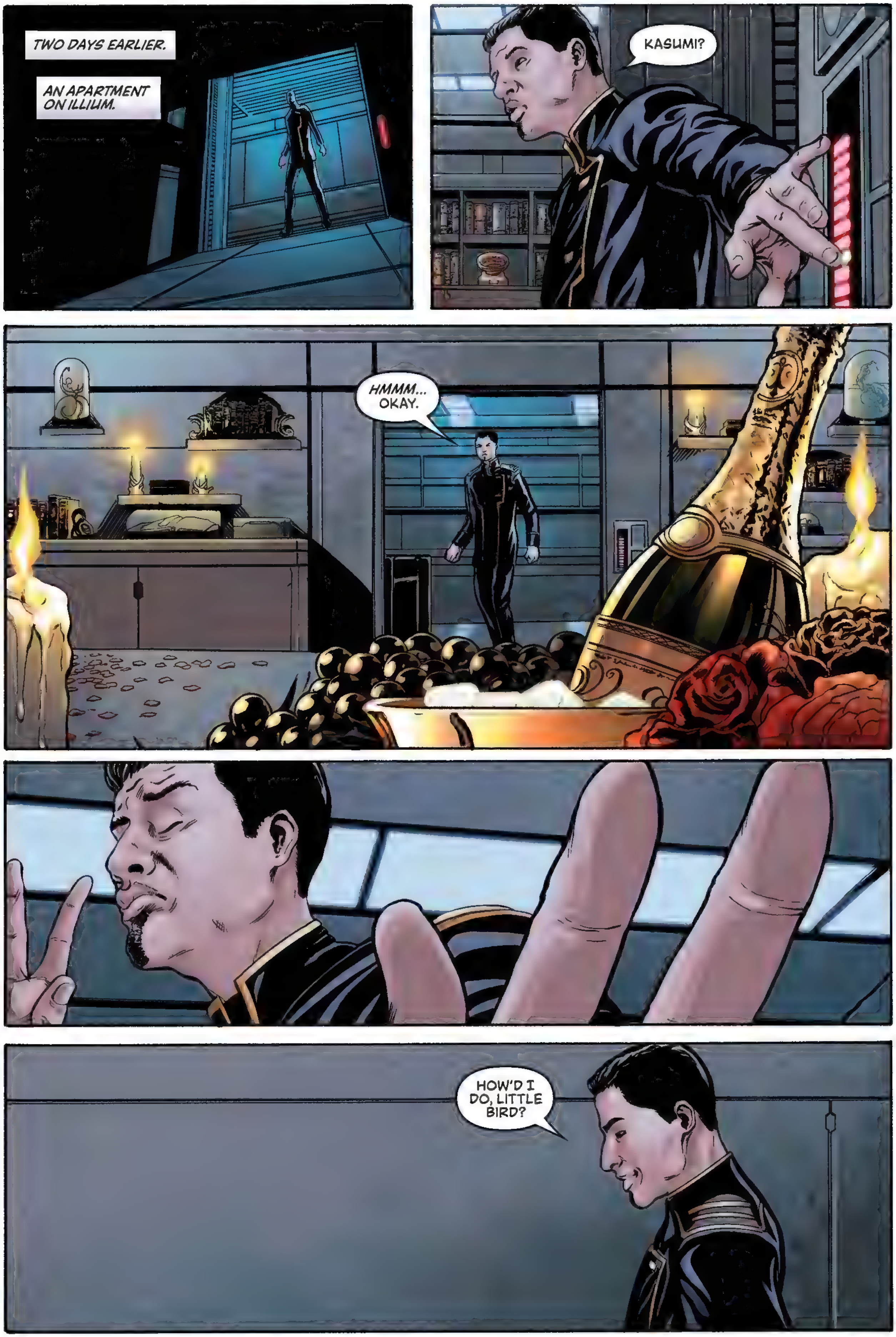

WHERE'S MORDIN?
HRMP!
MORDIN!
YOU BASTARD --
I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO GET BACK TO THE SHIP.
SAW A CHANCE. I TOOK IT.
IS SHE -- ?
YEAH. SO MUCH FOR HER GODS.
C'MON, LET'S GET YOU OUT OF HERE.

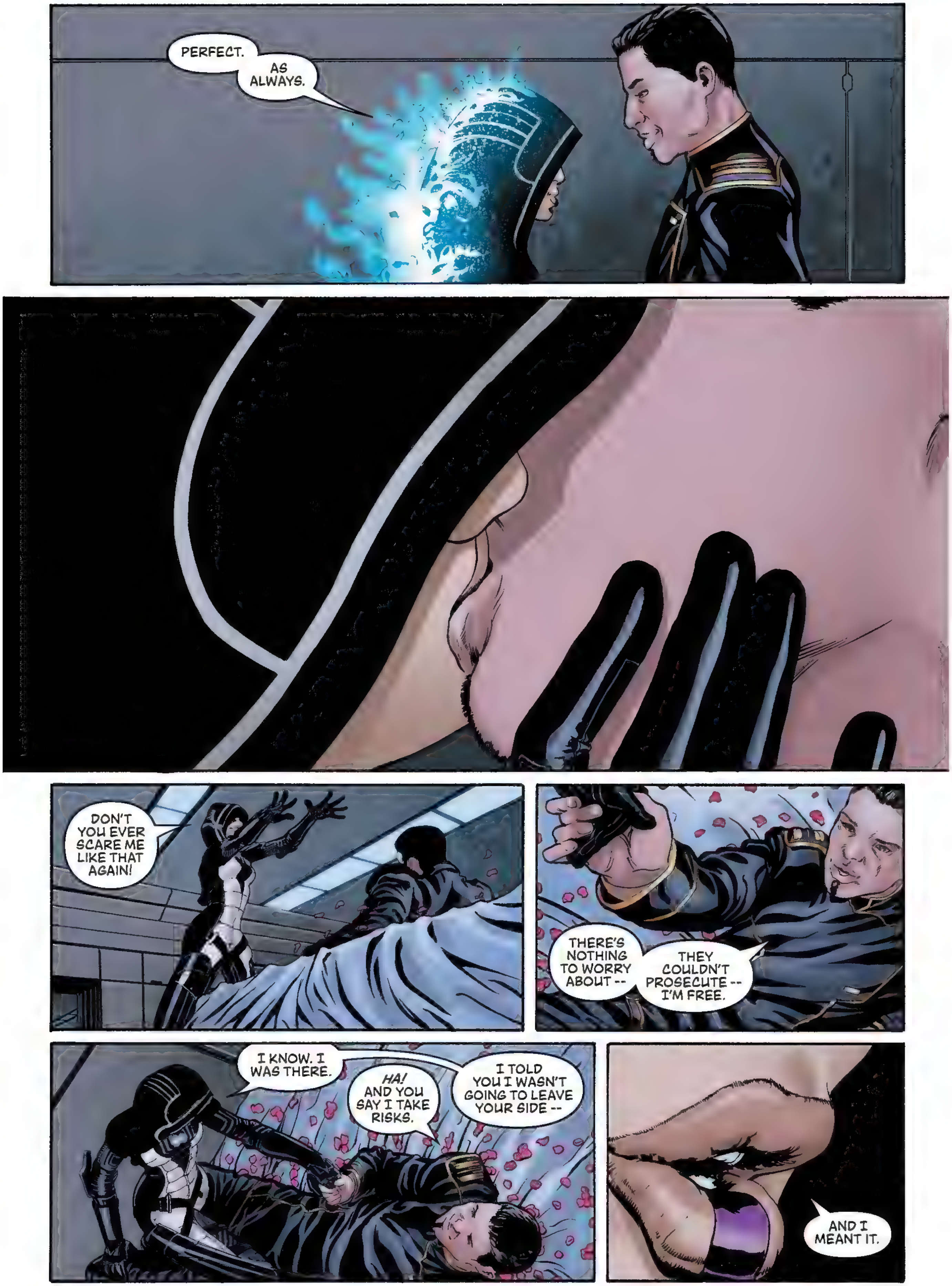

EVERYONE ACCOUNTED FOR?
ALL HERE.
HERE. LIE DOWN.
UHHHH.
IT'S NEVER BORING WITH YOU, MORDIN. I'LL SAY THAT MUCH.
NEXT TIME MAYBE DON'T TELL THE TEAM TO BLOW THE PLACE UP WITH US STILL IN IT, OKAY?
GET SOME REST.
YES. NEXT TIME. YES.

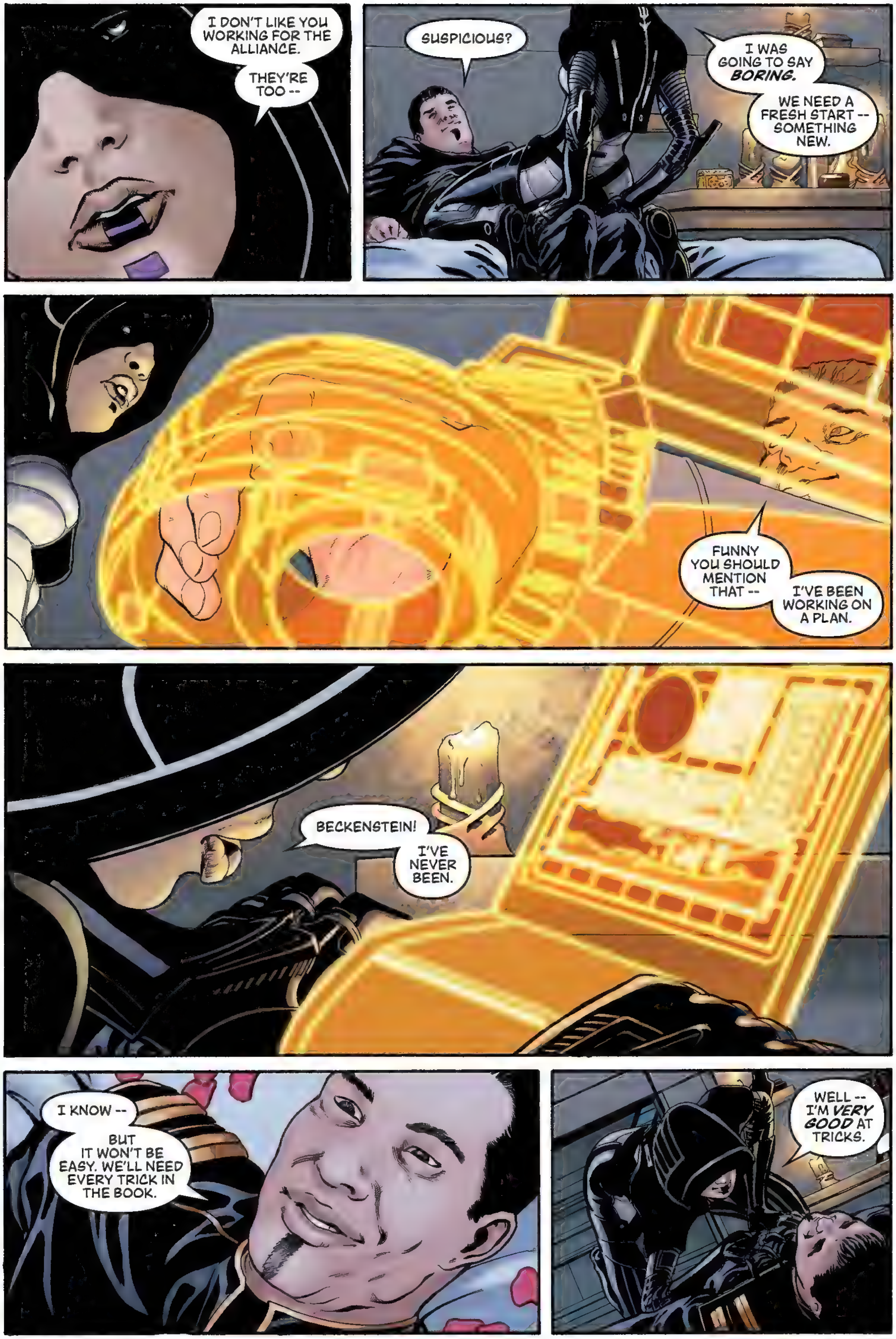

WHAT DID THAT KROGAN FEMALE SAY BACK THERE?
NOT SURE -- NEED TO THINK. CONSIDER --
SHE SEEMED...MORE REASONABLE THAN I EXPECTED.
YOUR POINT?
I JUST -- I WONDER IF WE'RE DOING THE RIGHT THING.
AND IF WE DON'T?
WHEN KROGAN OUTNUMBER EVERY SPECIES...
DO YOU THINK THEY WILL STILL BE REASONABLE?
I DON'T KNOW -- BUT HOW DO YOU KNOW THEY WON'T BE?
DON'T KNOW. OUTCOME UNCERTAIN.
BUT RISK TOO HIGH.
I THOUGHT RISK WAS NECESSARY...

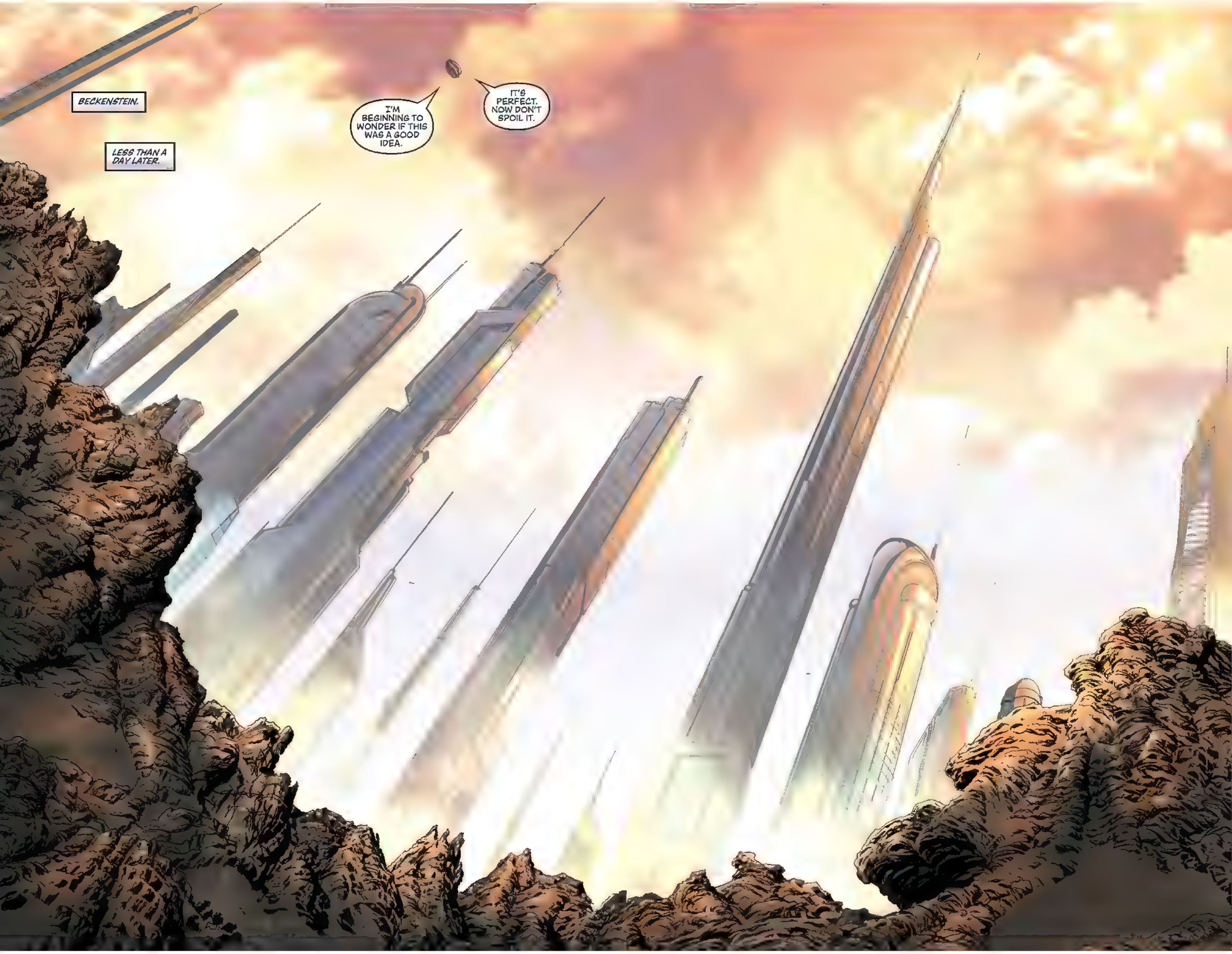

WE'VE LOST HER AGAIN.
ANY SIGN DOWNSTAIRS?
ARRGH!
ZSSSSST
ZSSSSSST
UNGH!
I'M COMING, KEIJI --
ACCESS GRANTED

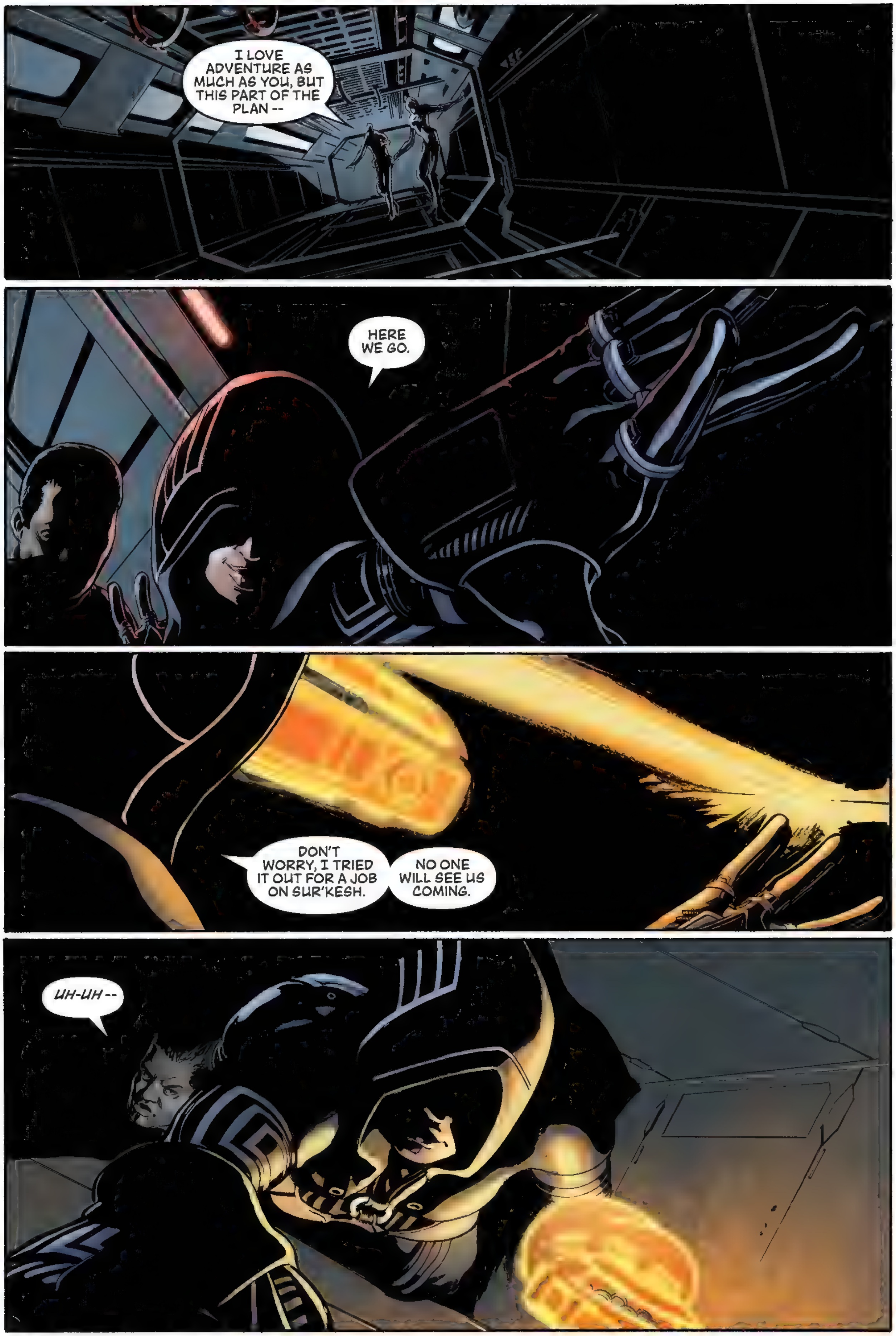

CERBERUS CASE FILE:
GOTO, KASUMI --
MASTER THIEF
KEIJI!

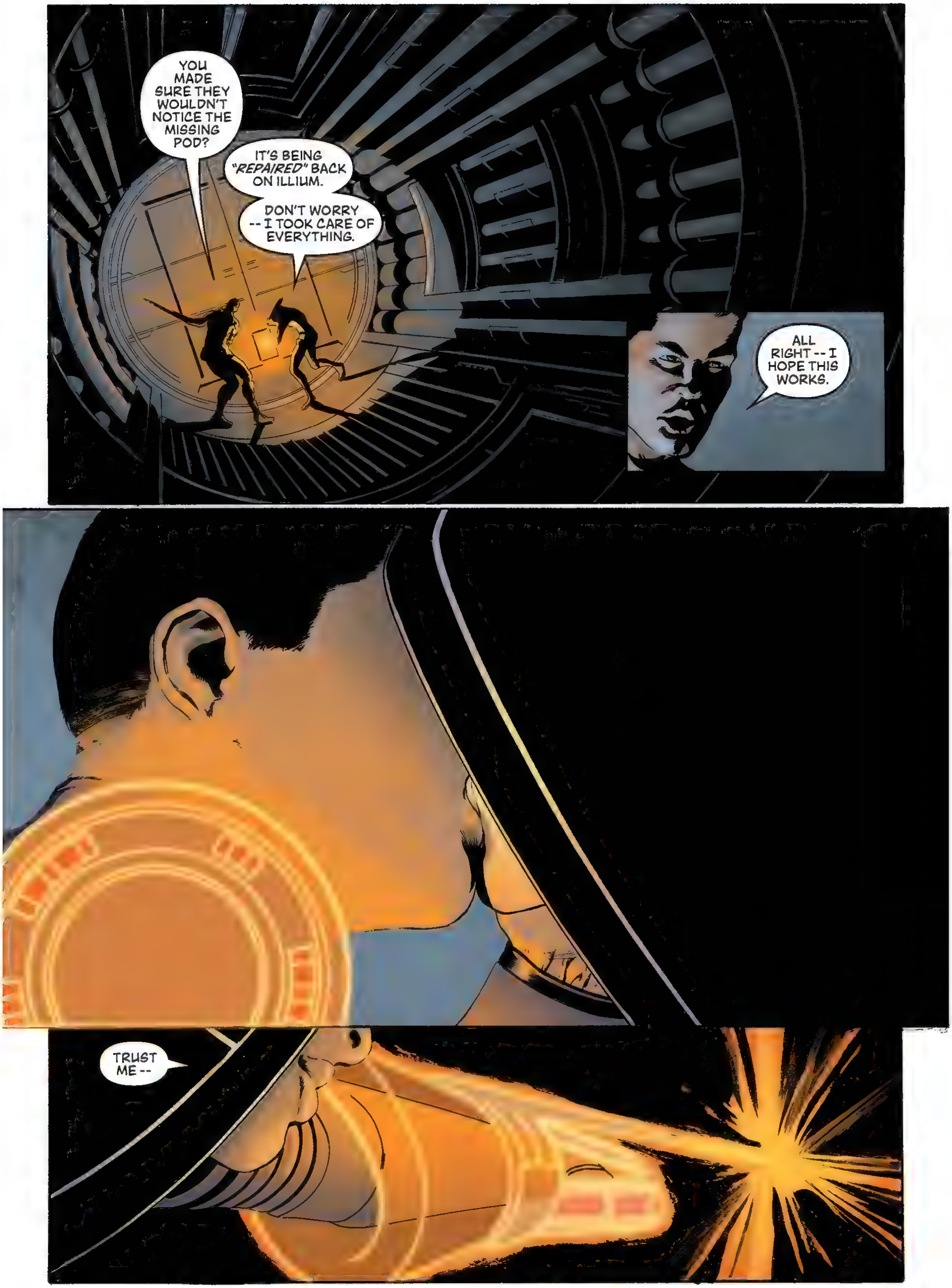

TWO DAYS EARLIER.
AN APARTMENT ON ILLIUM.
KASUMI?
HMMM... OKAY.
HOW'D I DO, LITTLE BIRD?

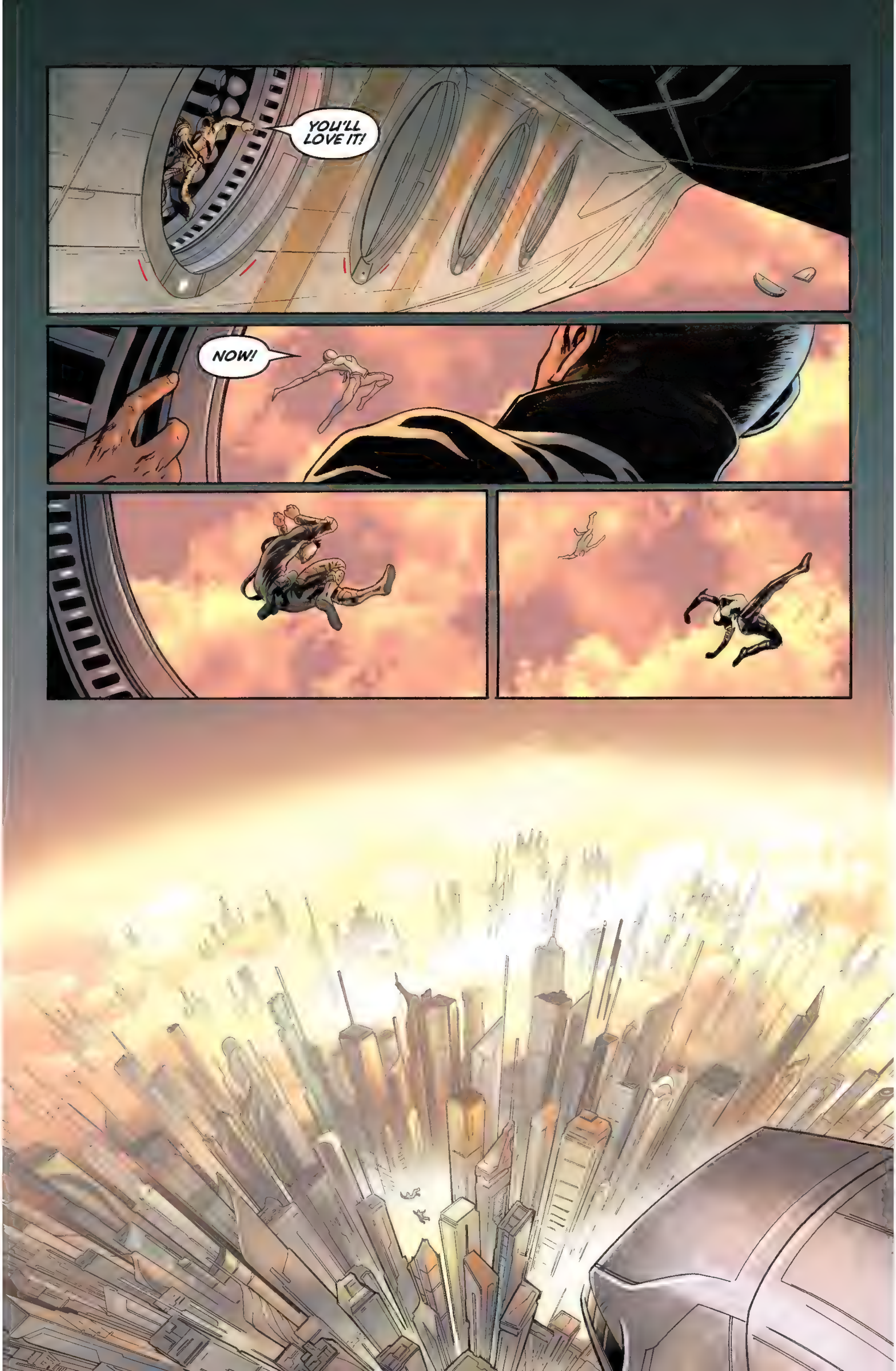

PERFECT.
AS ALWAYS.
DON'T YOU EVER SCARE ME LIKE THAT AGAIN!
THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT --
THEY COULDN'T PROSECUTE -- I'M FREE.
I KNOW. I WAS THERE.
I TOLD YOU I WASN'T GOING TO LEAVE YOUR SIDE --
HA! AND YOU SAY I TAKE RISKS.
AND I MEANT IT.

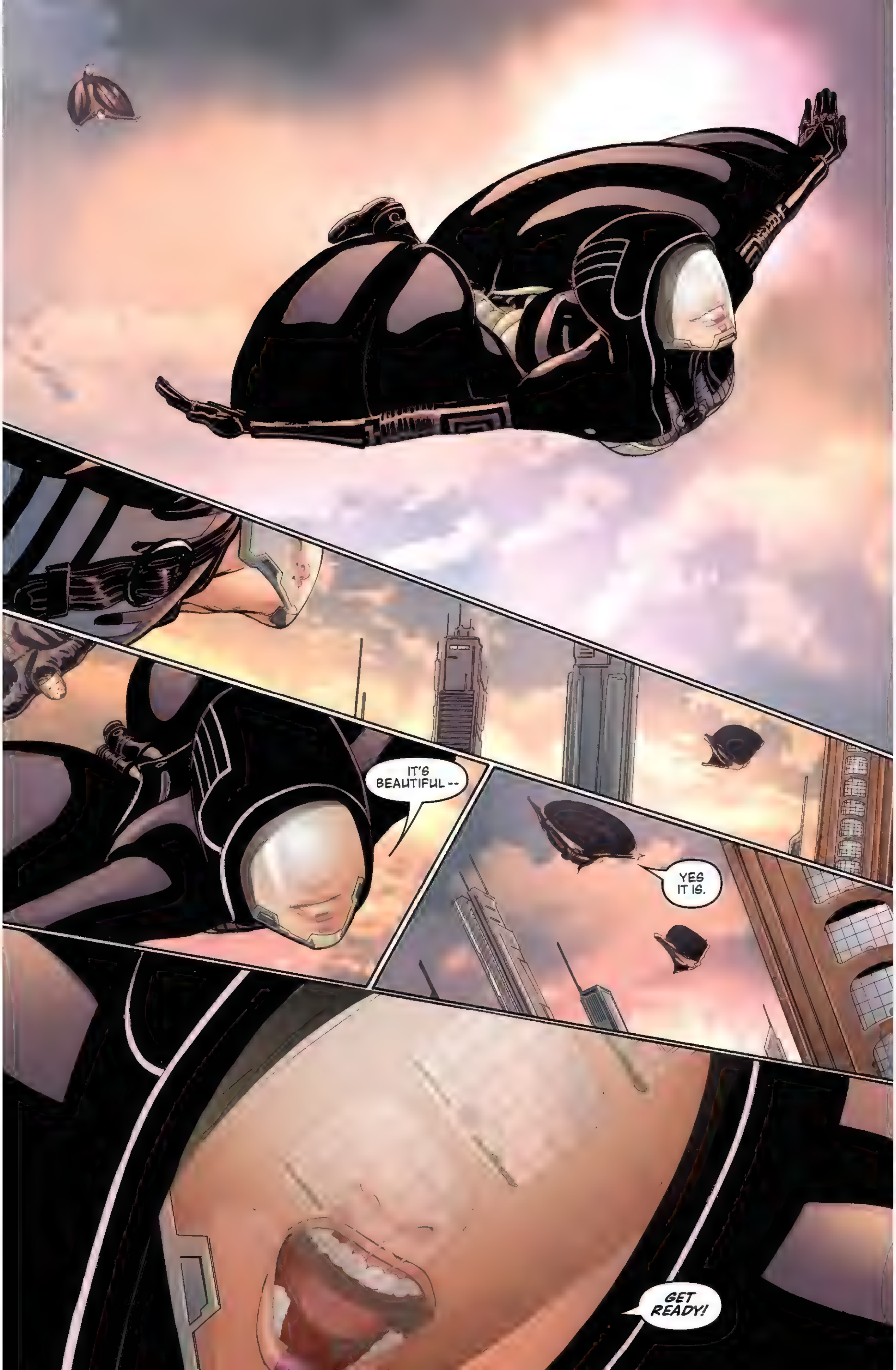

I DON'T LIKE YOU WORKING FOR THE ALLIANCE.
THEY'RE TOO --
SUSPICIOUS?
I WAS GOING TO SAY *BORING.*
WE NEED A FRESH START -- SOMETHING NEW.
FUNNY YOU SHOULD MENTION THAT --
I'VE BEEN WORKING ON A PLAN.
BECKENSTEIN!
I'VE NEVER BEEN.
I KNOW --
BUT IT WON'T BE EASY. WE'LL NEED EVERY TRICK IN THE BOOK.
WELL -- I'M *VERY GOOD* AT TRICKS.

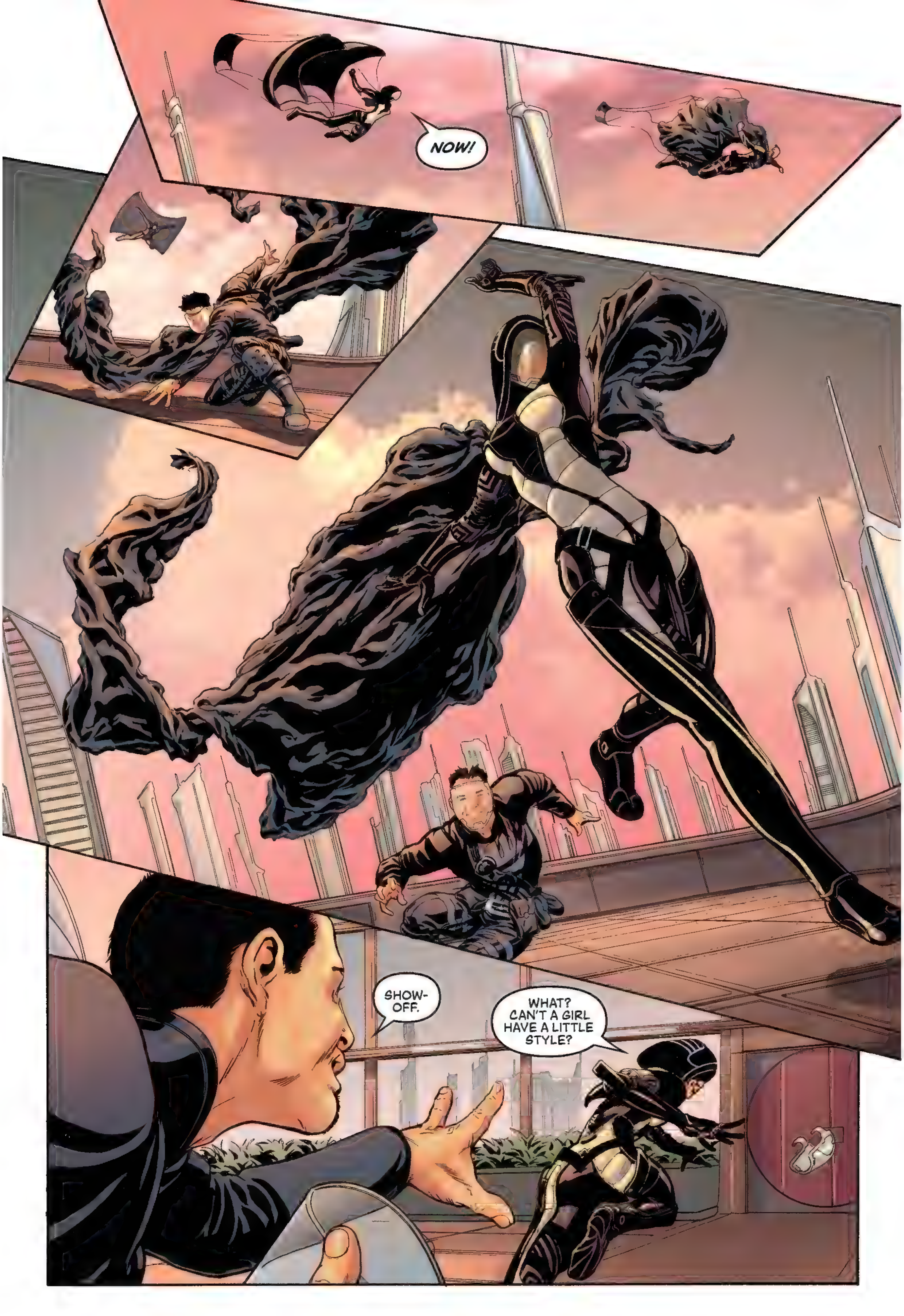

BECKENSTEIN.
LESS THAN A DAY LATER...
I'M BEGINNING TO WONDER IF THIS WAS A GOOD IDEA.
IT'S PERFECT. NOW DON'T SPOIL IT.

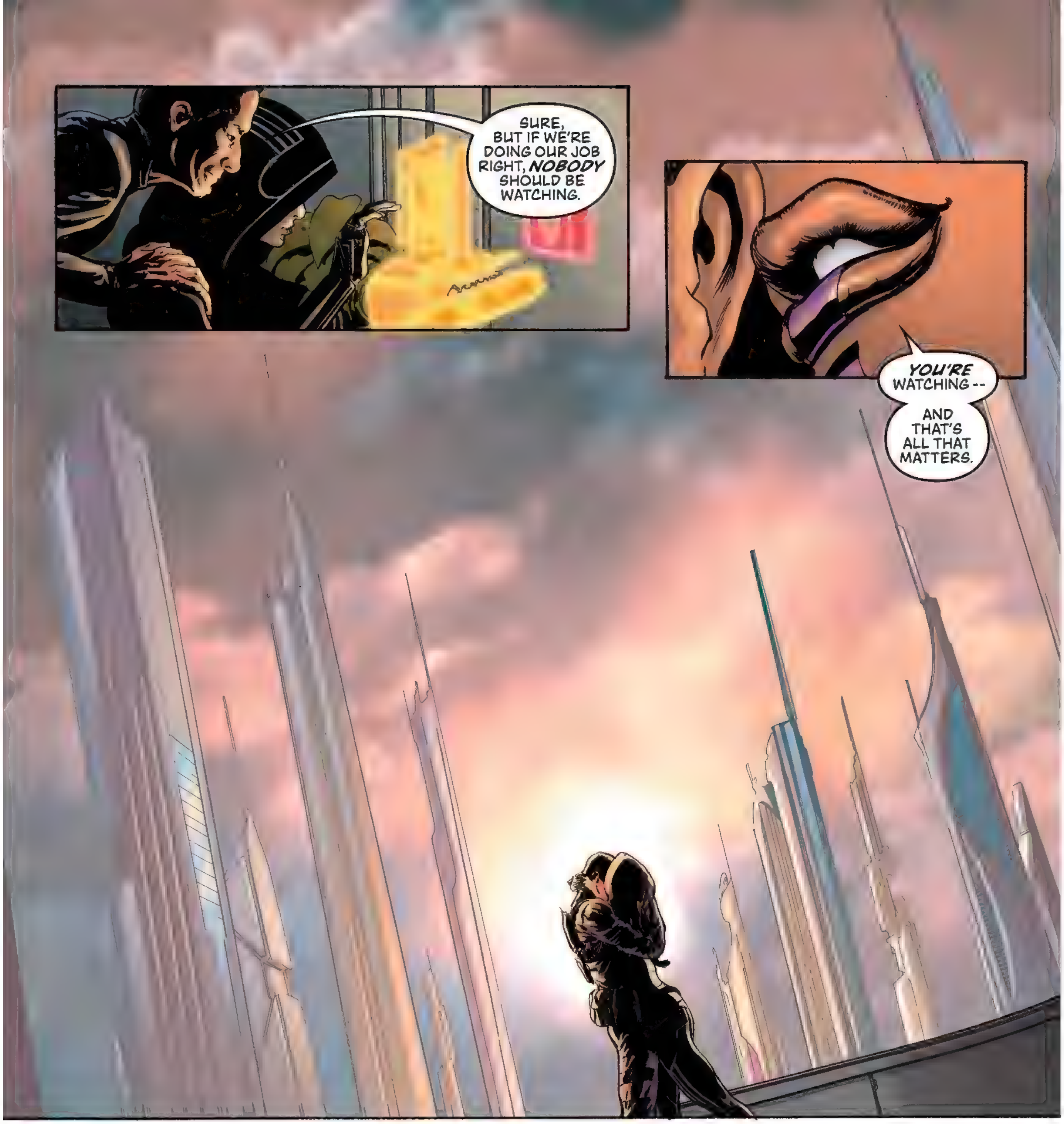

I LOVE ADVENTURE AS MUCH AS YOU, BUT THIS PART OF THE PLAN --
HERE WE GO.
DON'T WORRY, I TRIED IT OUT FOR A JOB ON SUR'KESH.
NO ONE WILL SEE US COMING.
UH-UH --

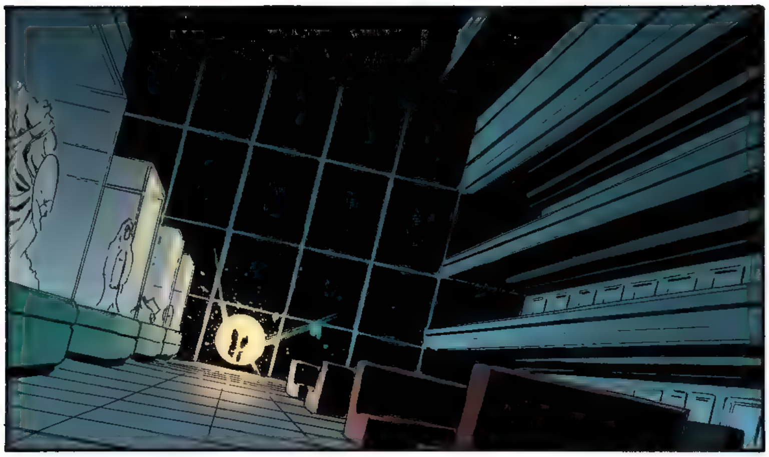

YOU MADE SURE THEY WOULDN'T NOTICE THE MISSING POD?
IT'S BEING *"REPAIRED"* BACK ON ILLIUM.
DON'T WORRY -- I TOOK CARE OF EVERYTHING.
ALL RIGHT -- I HOPE THIS WORKS.
TRUST ME --

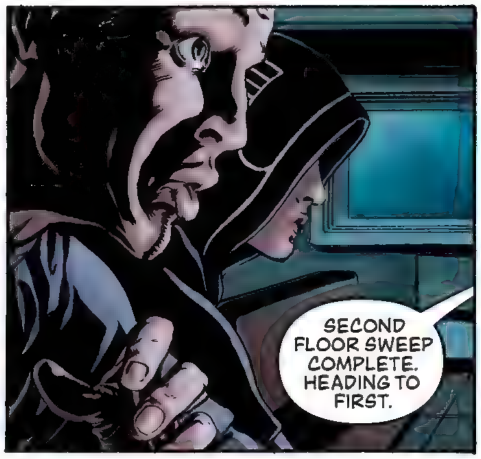

YOU'LL LOVE IT!
NOW!

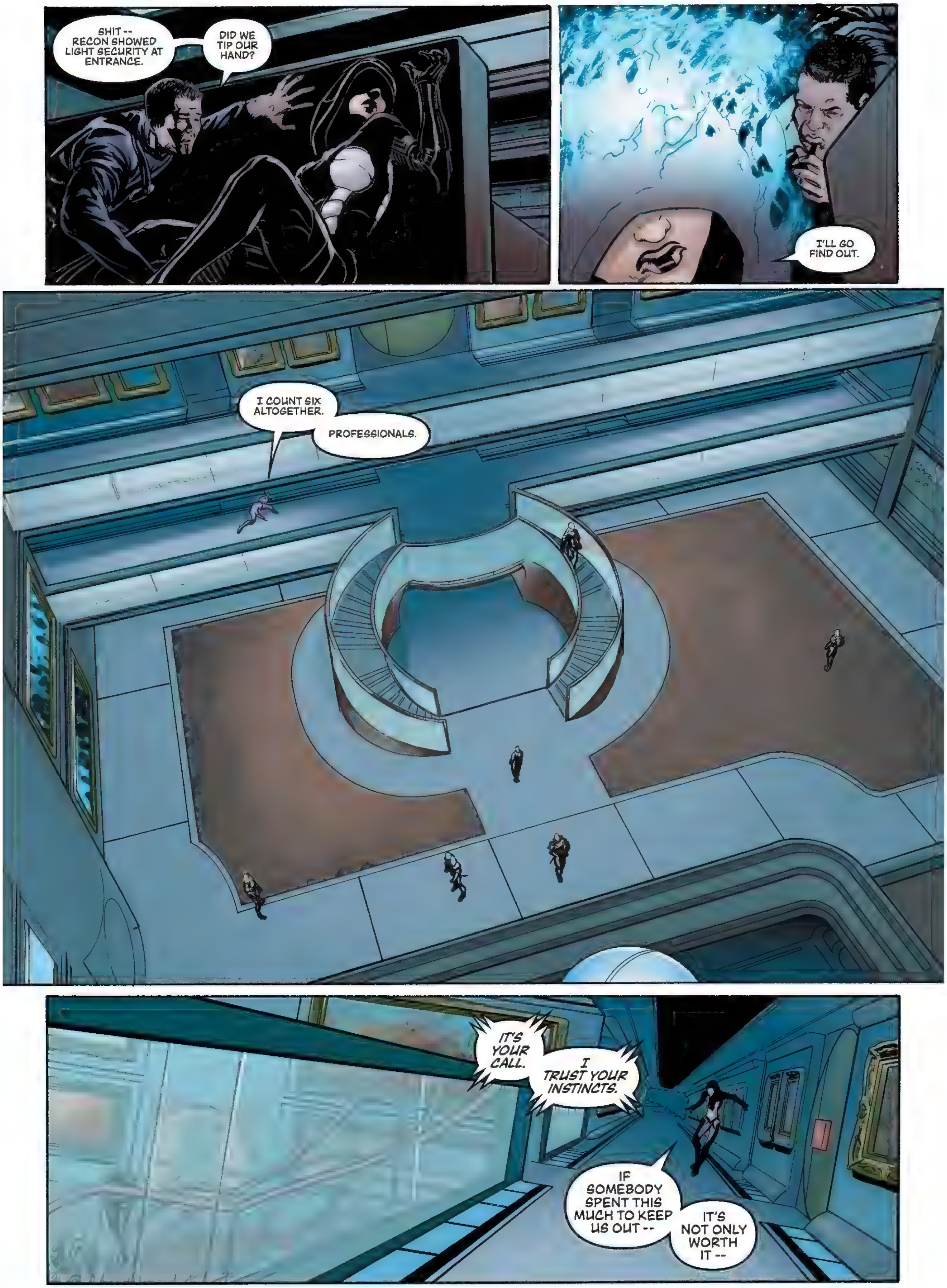

IT'S BEAUTIFUL --
YES IT IS.
GET READY!

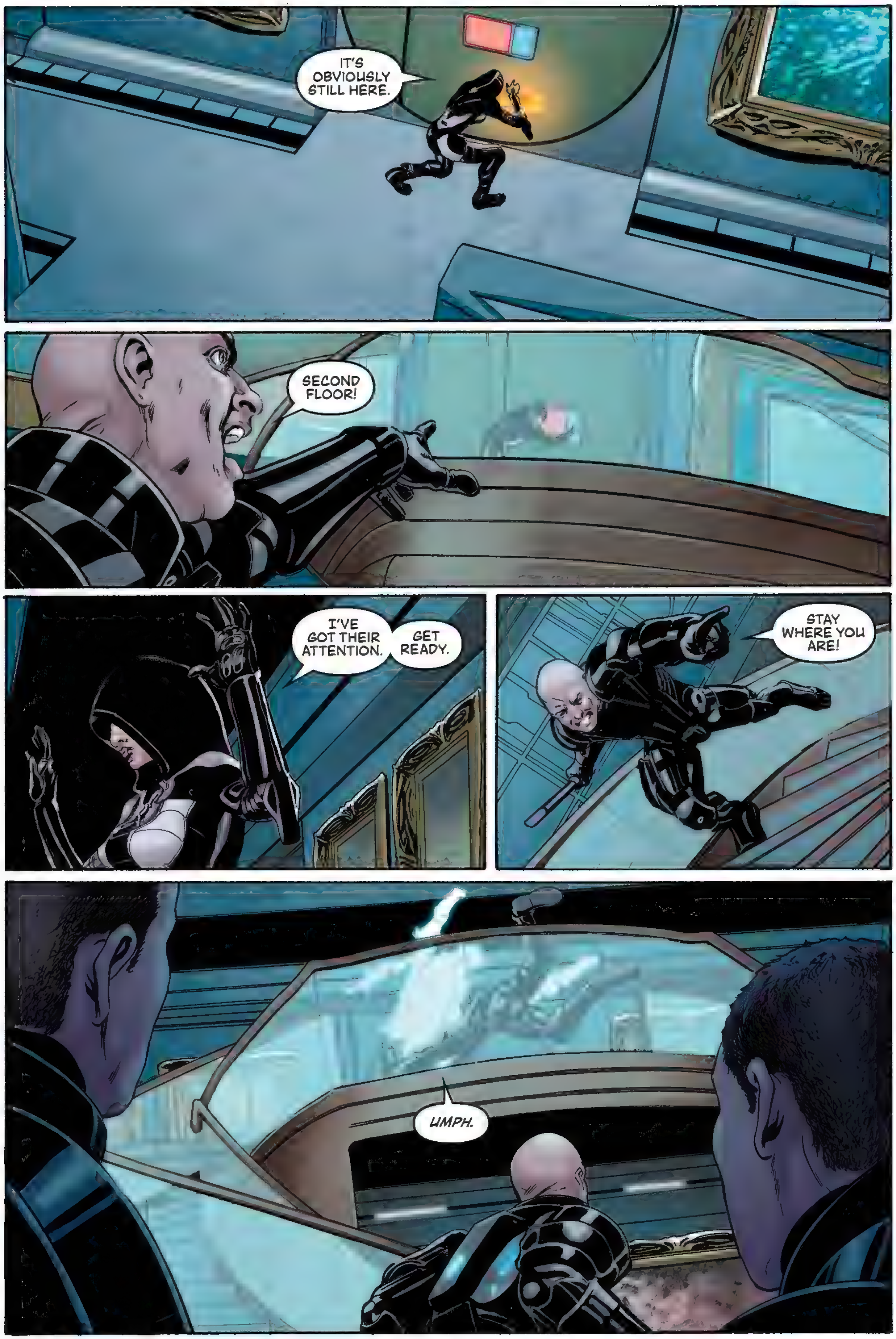

NOW!
SHOW-OFF.
WHAT? CAN'T A GIRL HAVE A LITTLE STYLE?

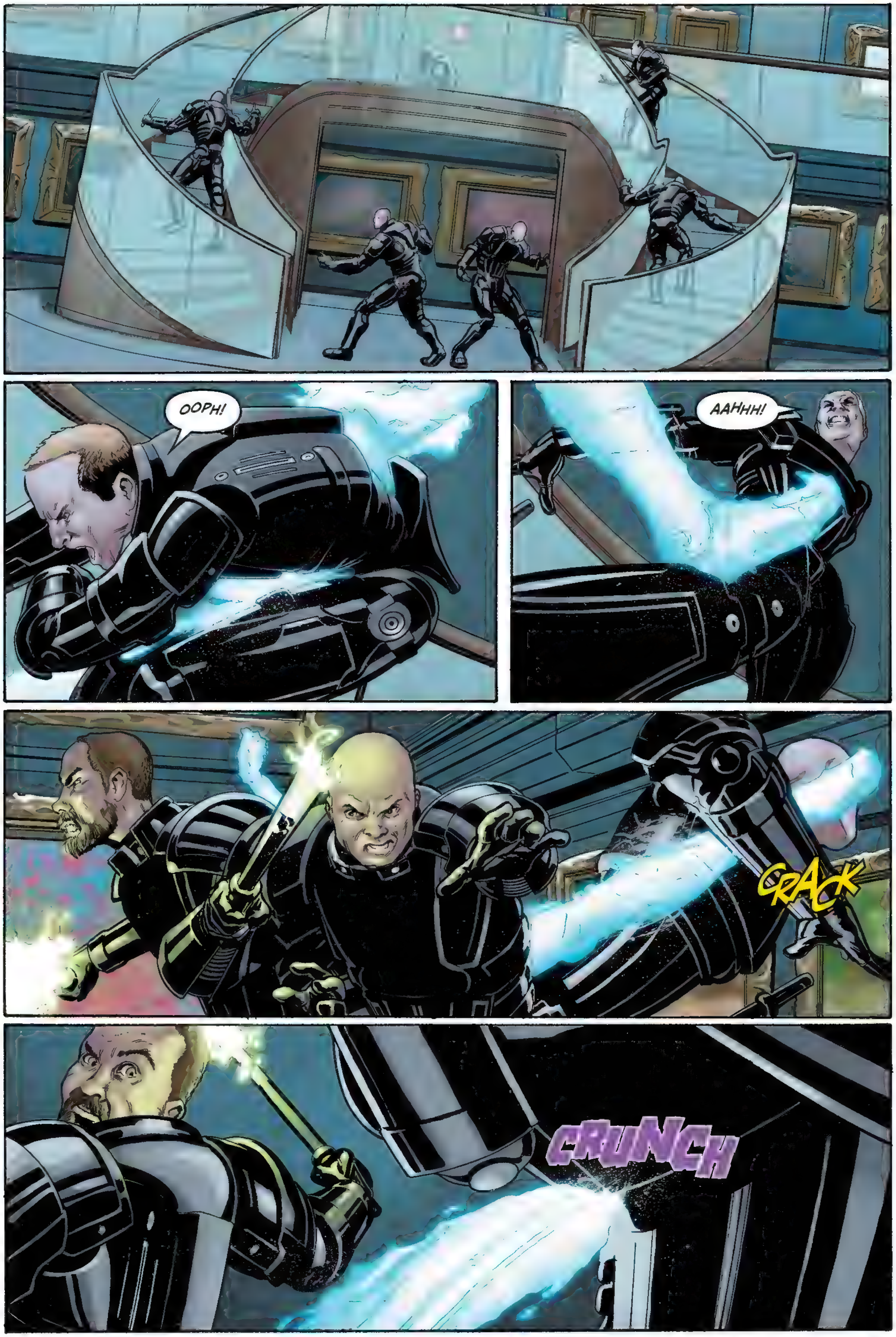

SURE, BUT IF WE'RE DOING OUR JOB RIGHT, ***NOBODY*** SHOULD BE WATCHING.
YOU'RE WATCHING --
AND THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS.

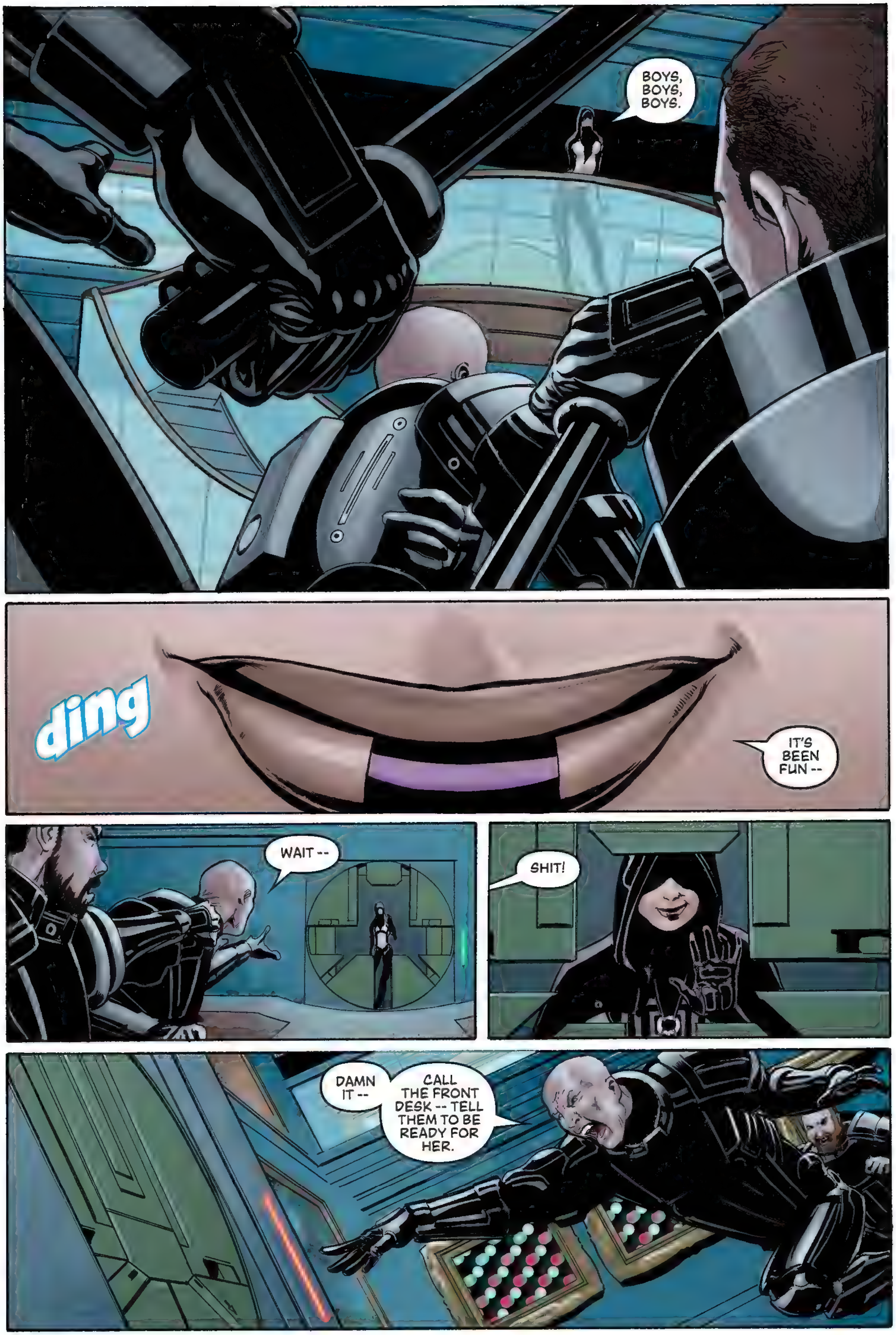


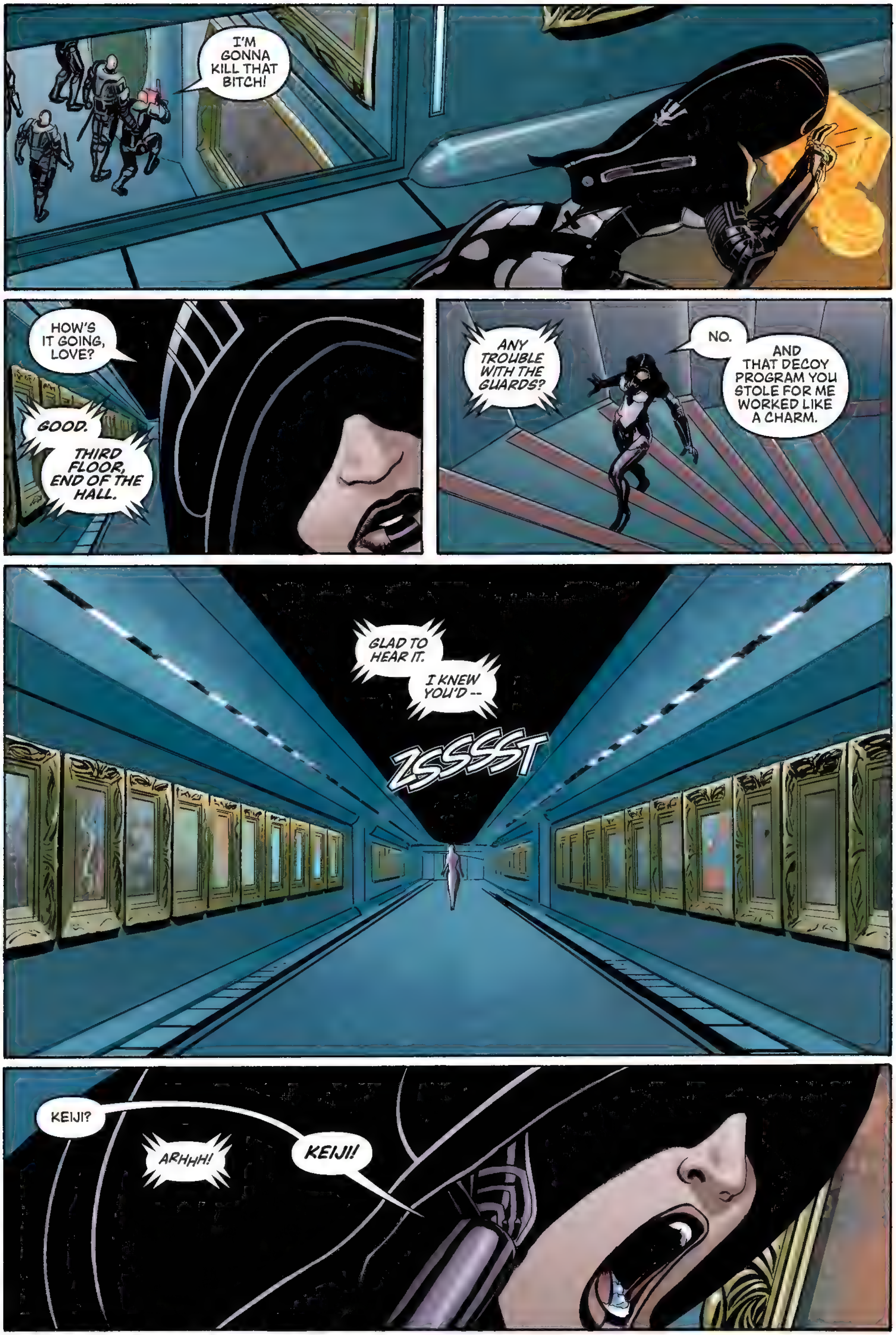

SECOND FLOOR SWEEP COMPLETE. HEADING TO FIRST.

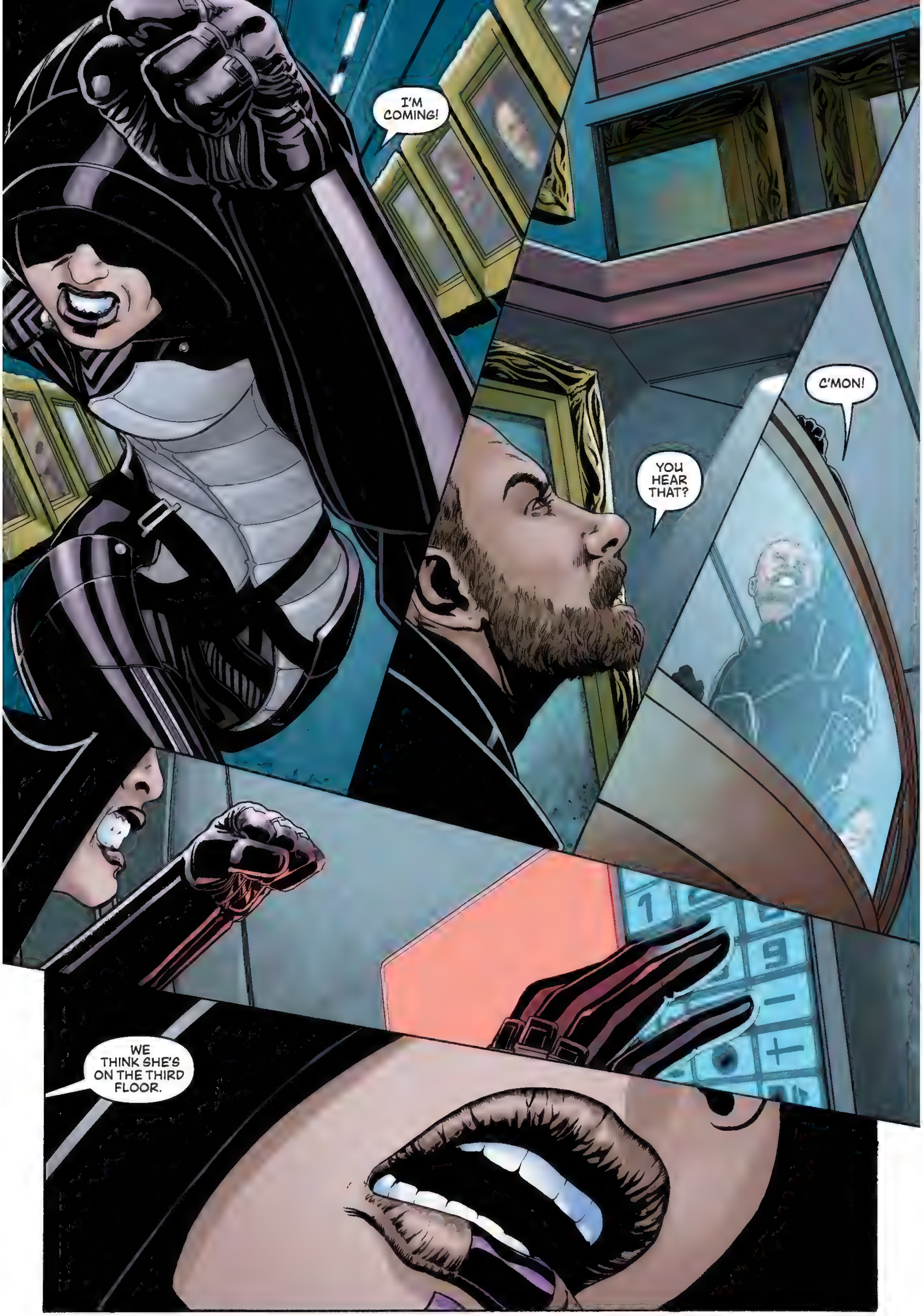

SHIT -- RECON SHOWED LIGHT SECURITY AT ENTRANCE.
DID WE TIP OUR HAND?
I'LL GO FIND OUT.
I COUNT SIX ALTOGETHER.
PROFESSIONALS.
IT'S YOUR CALL.
I TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS.
IF SOMEBODY SPENT THIS MUCH TO KEEP US OUT --
IT'S NOT ONLY WORTH IT --

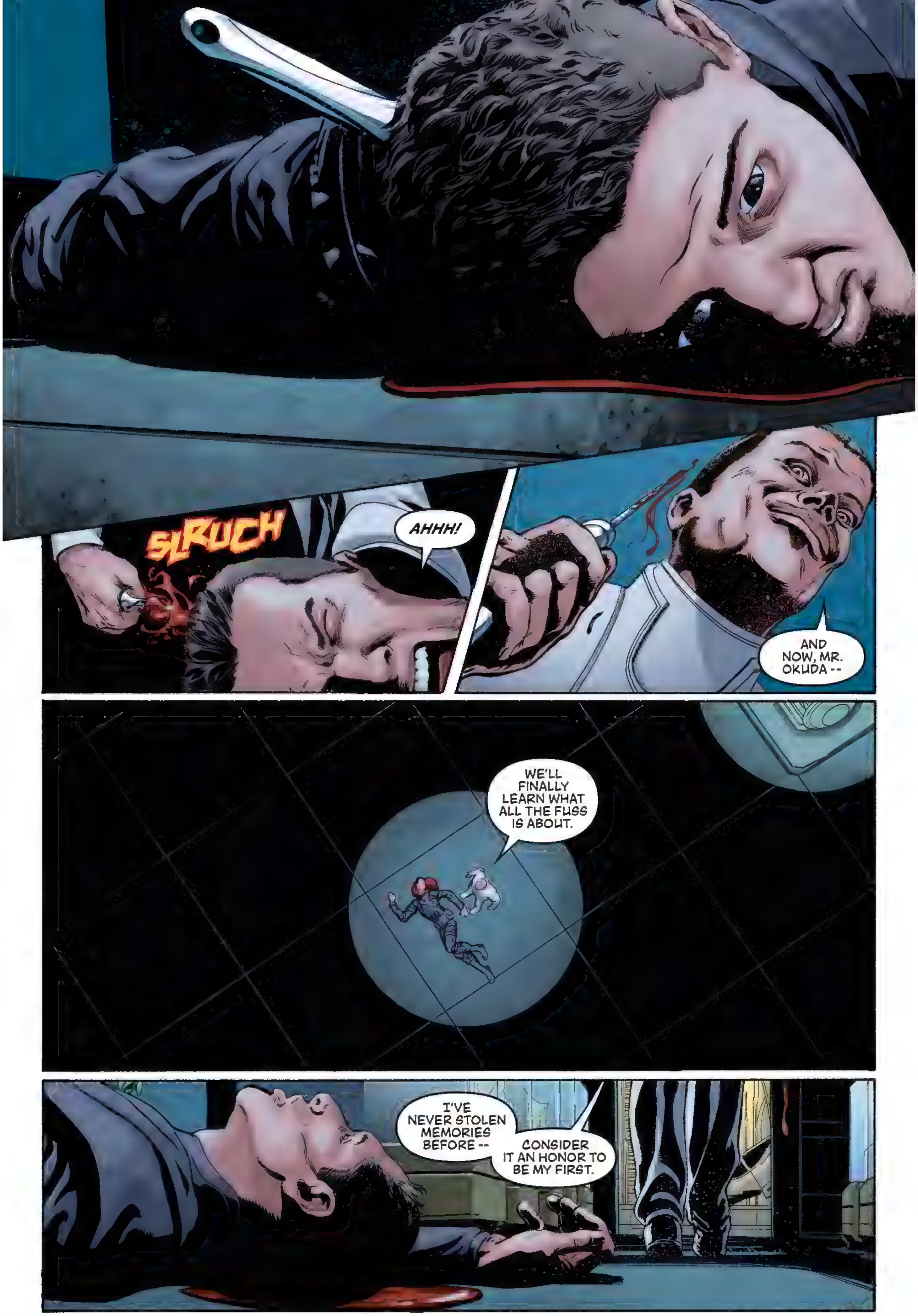

IT'S OBVIOUSLY STILL HERE.
SECOND FLOOR!
I'VE GOT THEIR ATTENTION.
GET READY.
STAY WHERE YOU ARE!
UMPH.

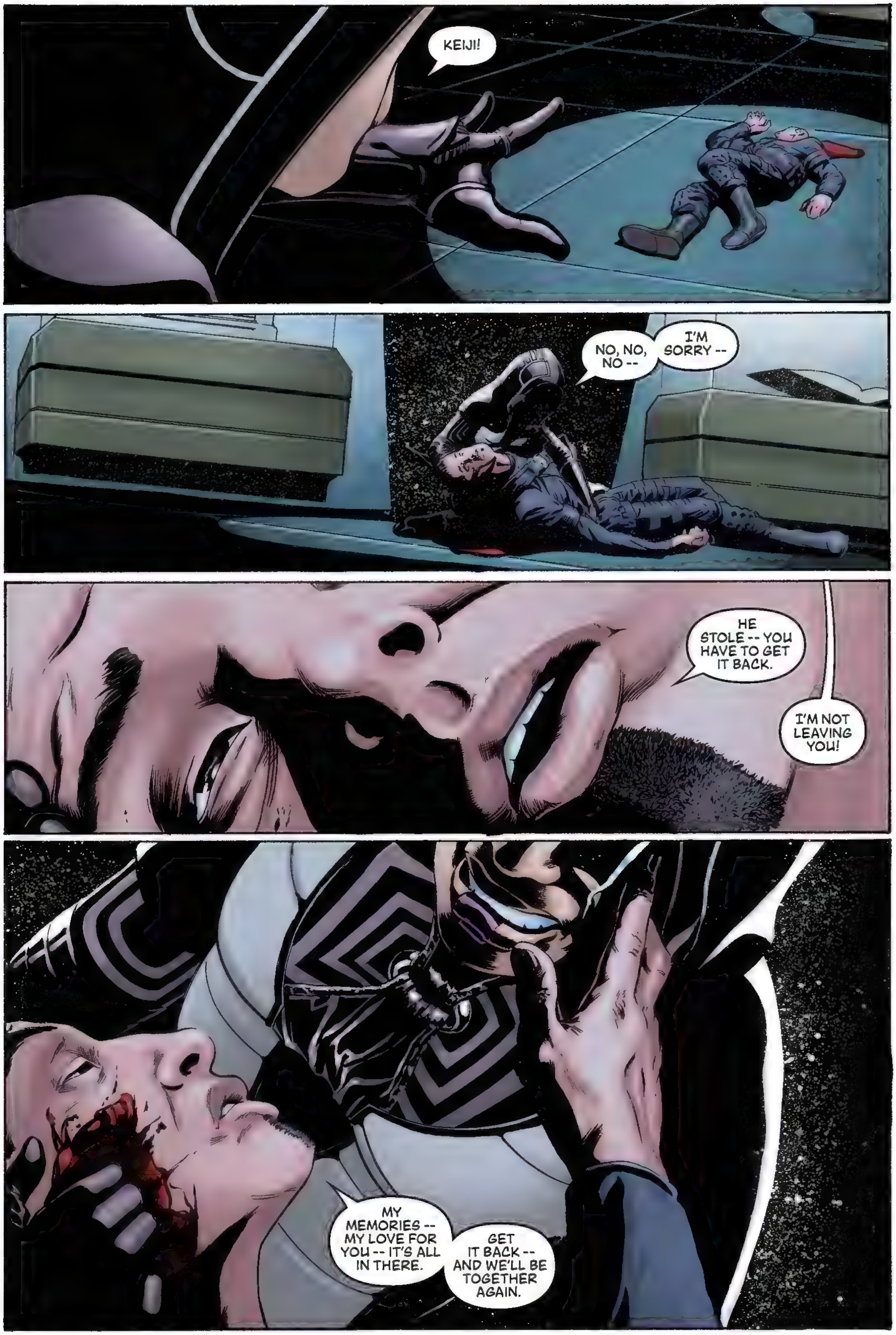

OOPH!
AAHHH!
CRACK
CRUNCH

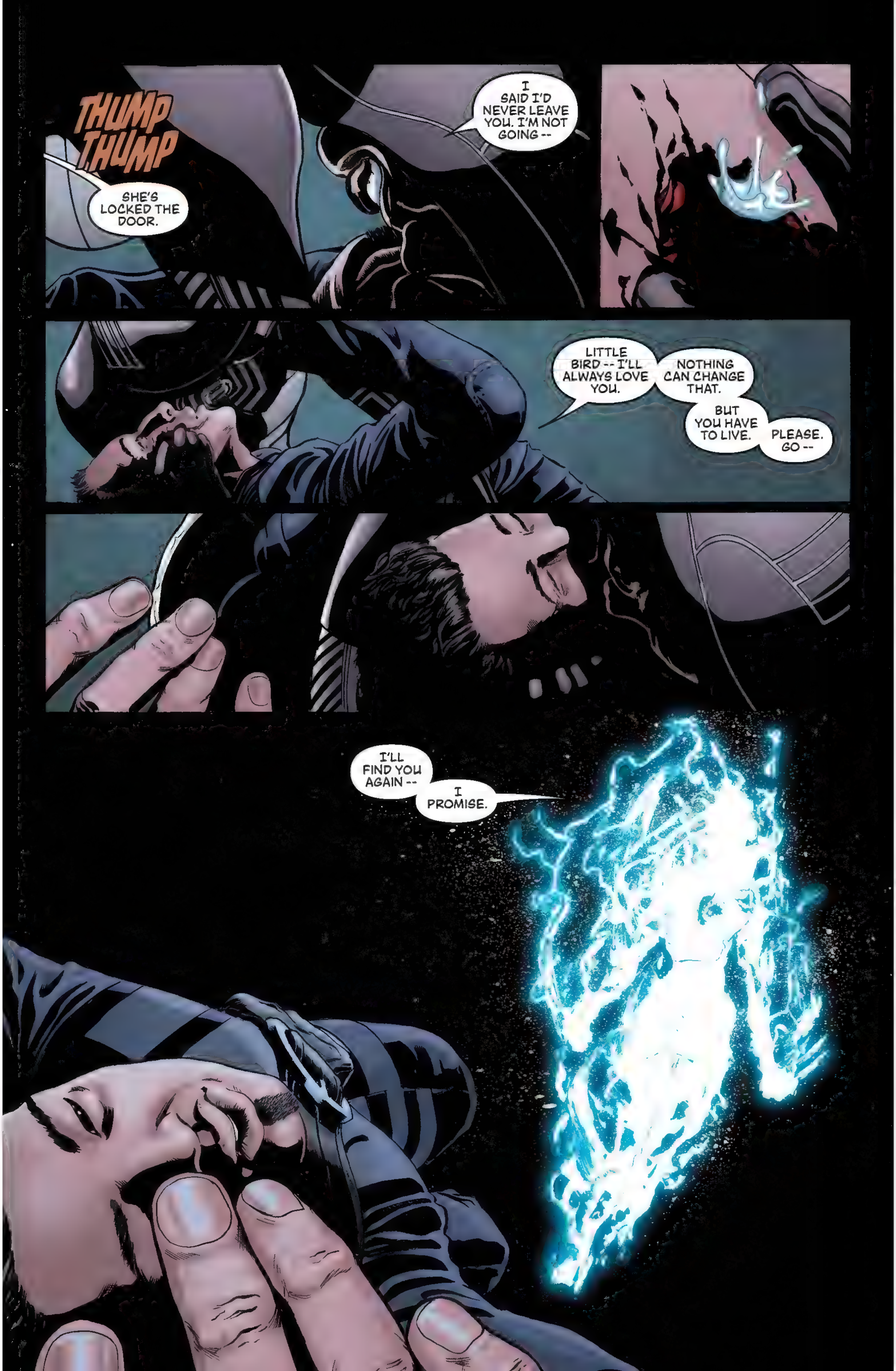

BOYS, BOYS, BOYS.
ding
IT'S BEEN FUN --
WAIT --
SHIT!
DAMN IT --
CALL THE FRONT DESK -- TELL THEM TO BE READY FOR HER.

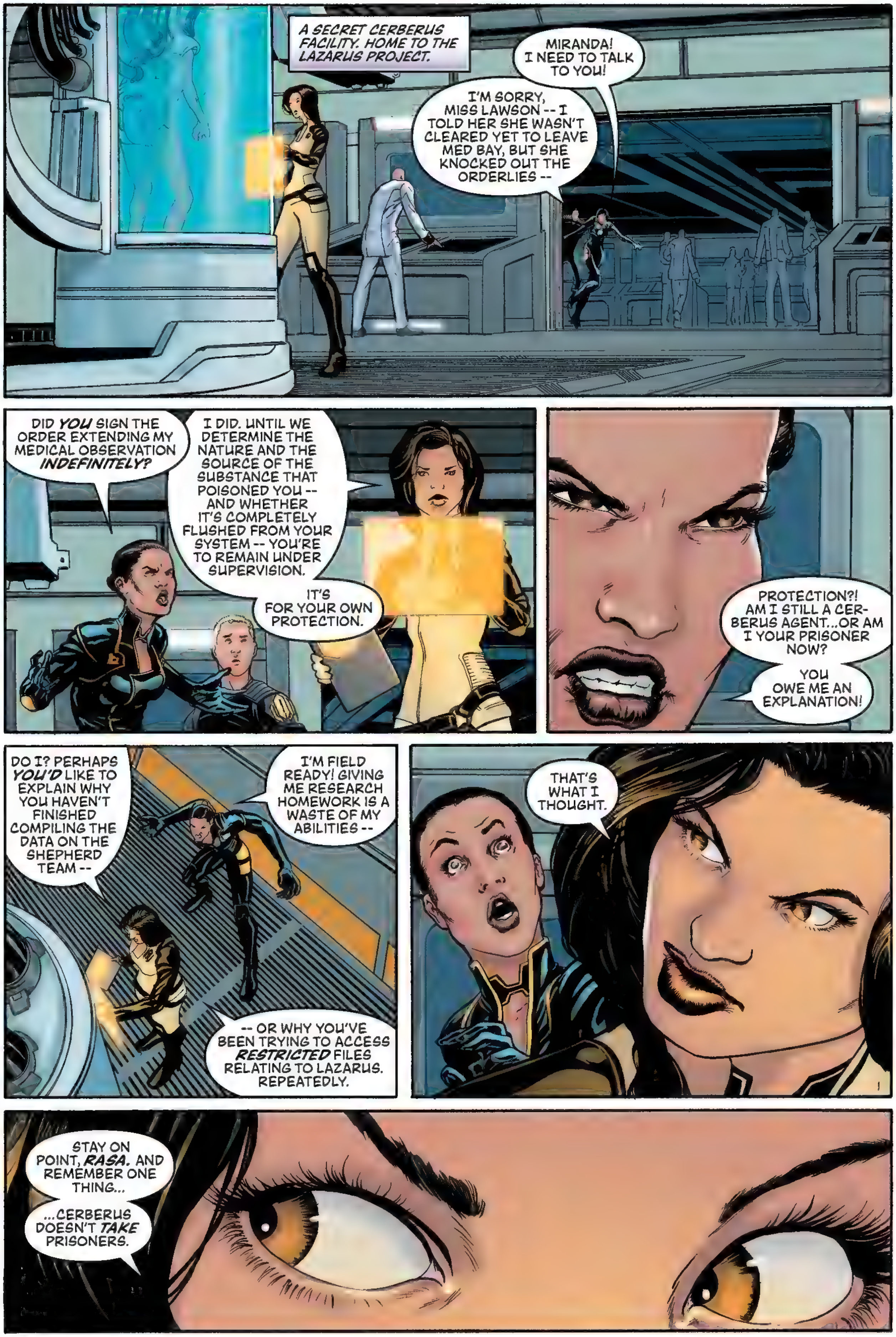

I'M GONNA KILL THAT BITCH!
HOW'S IT GOING, LOVE?
GOOD.
THIRD FLOOR, END OF THE HALL.
ANY TROUBLE WITH THE GUARDS?
NO.
AND THAT DECOY PROGRAM YOU STOLE FOR ME WORKED LIKE A CHARM.
GLAD TO HEAR IT.
I KNEW YOU'D --
ZSSSST
KEIJI?
ARHHH!
KEIJI!

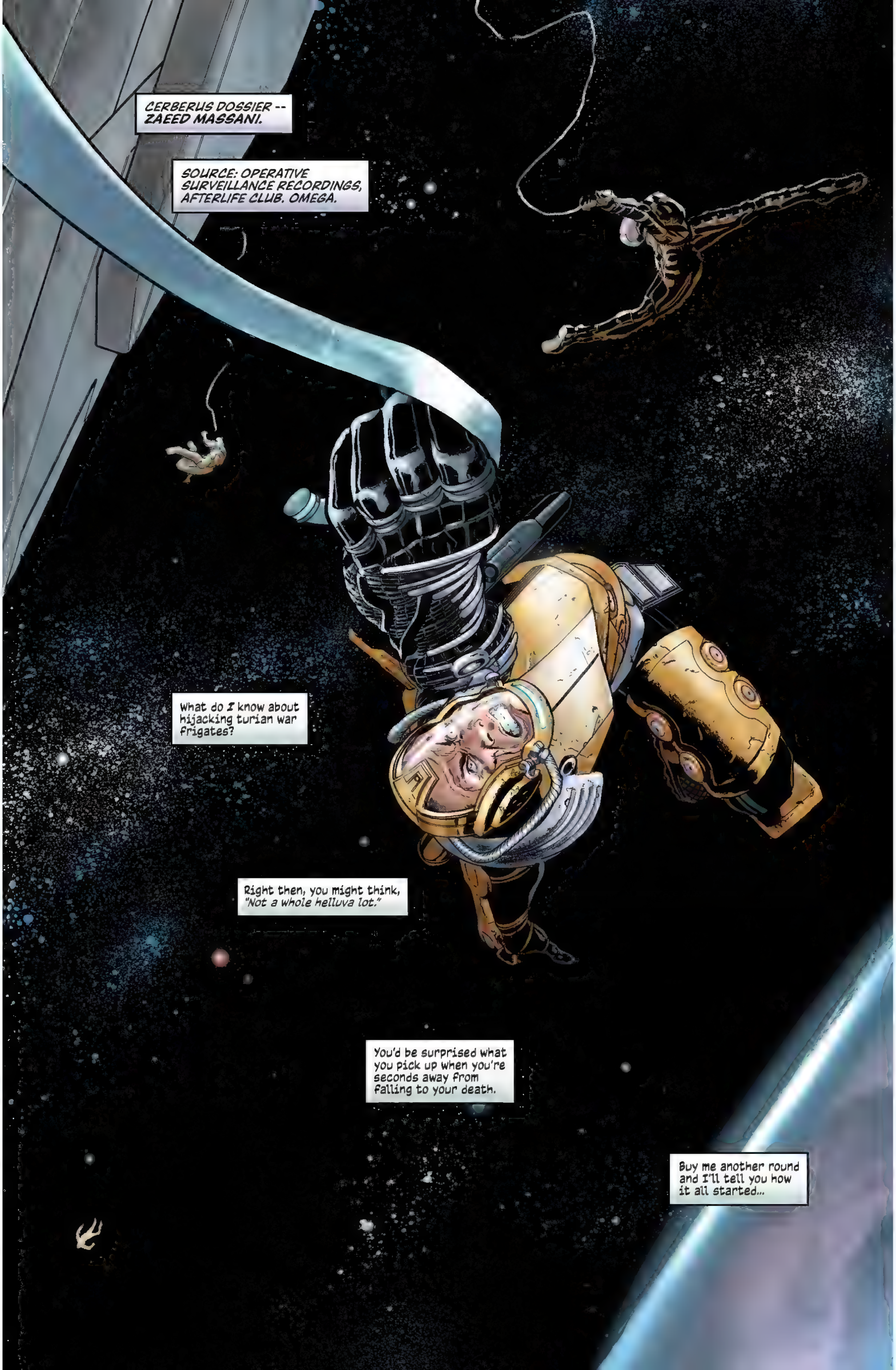

I'M COMING!
YOU HEAR THAT?
C'MON!
WE THINK SHE'S ON THE THIRD FLOOR.

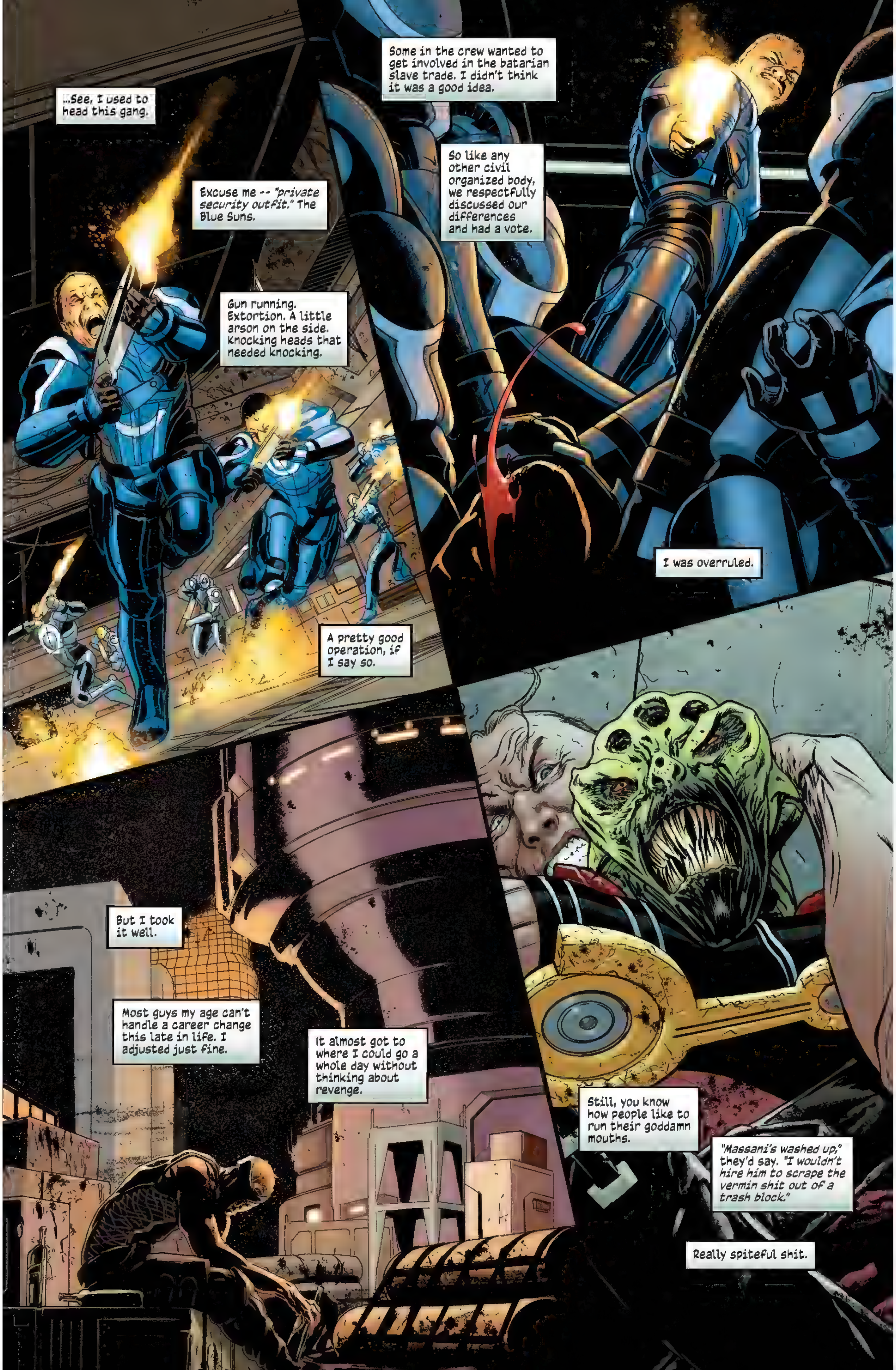

SLRUCH
AHHH!
AND NOW, MR. OKUDA --
WE'LL FINALLY LEARN WHAT ALL THE FUSS IS ABOUT.
I'VE NEVER STOLEN MEMORIES BEFORE --
CONSIDER IT AN HONOR TO BE MY FIRST.

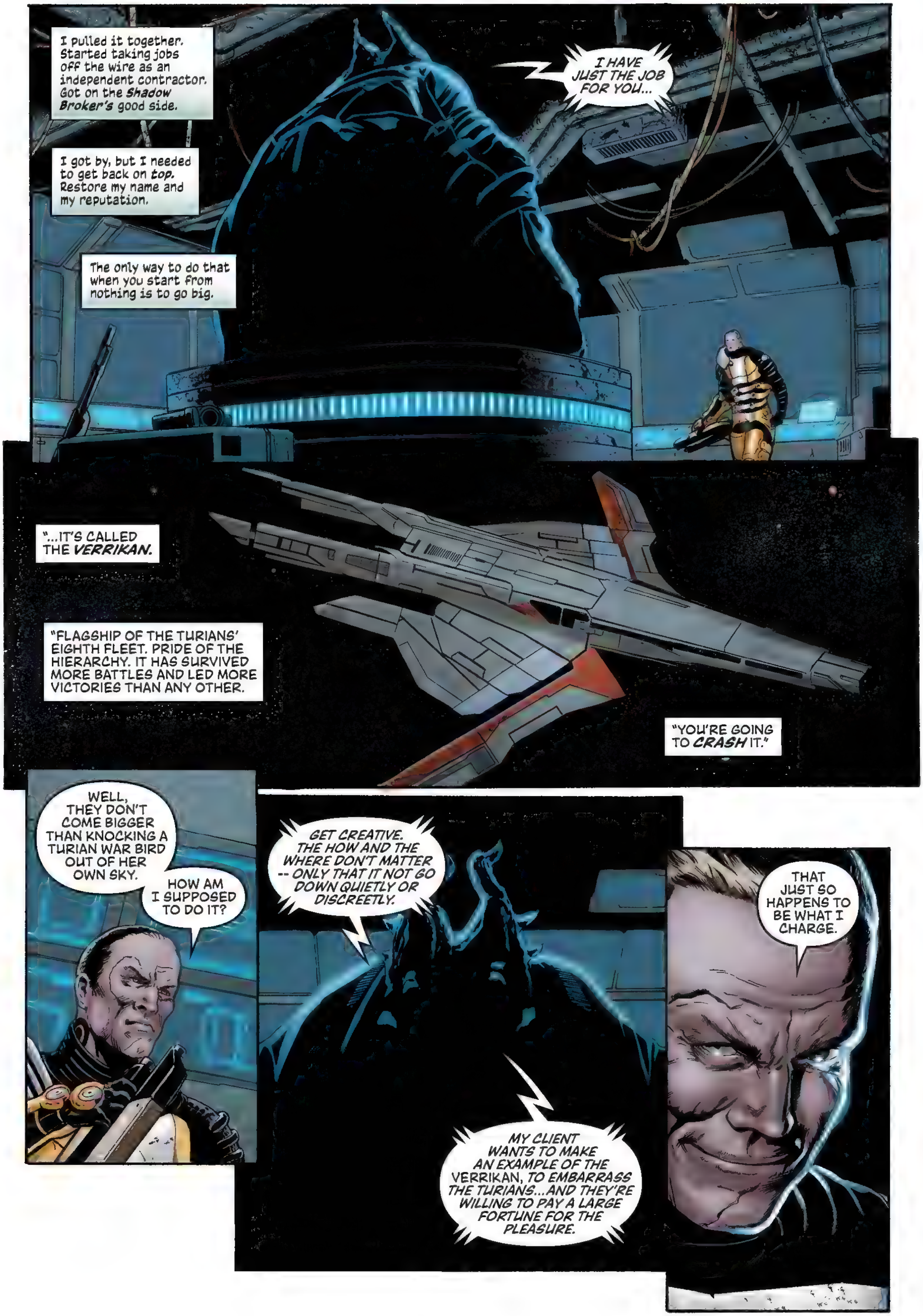

KEIJI!
NO, NO, NO --
I'M SORRY --
HE STOLE -- YOU HAVE TO GET IT BACK.
I'M NOT LEAVING YOU!
MY MEMORIES -- MY LOVE FOR YOU -- IT'S ALL IN THERE.
GET IT BACK -- AND WE'LL BE TOGETHER AGAIN.

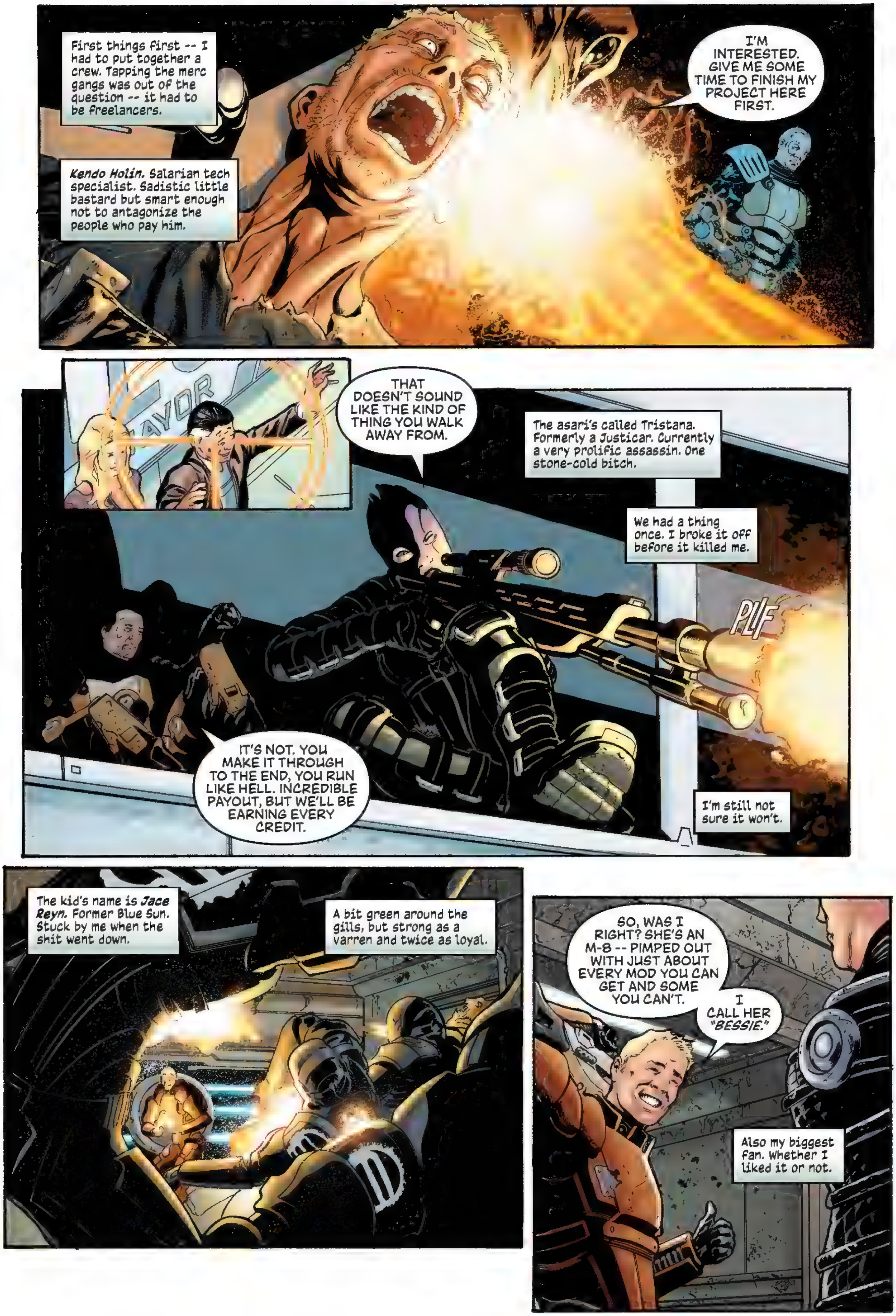

THUMP THUMP
SHE'S LOCKED THE DOOR.
I SAID I'D NEVER LEAVE YOU. I'M NOT GOING --
LITTLE BIRD -- I'LL ALWAYS LOVE YOU.
NOTHING CAN CHANGE THAT.
BUT YOU HAVE TO LIVE.
PLEASE. GO --
I'LL FIND YOU AGAIN --
I PROMISE.

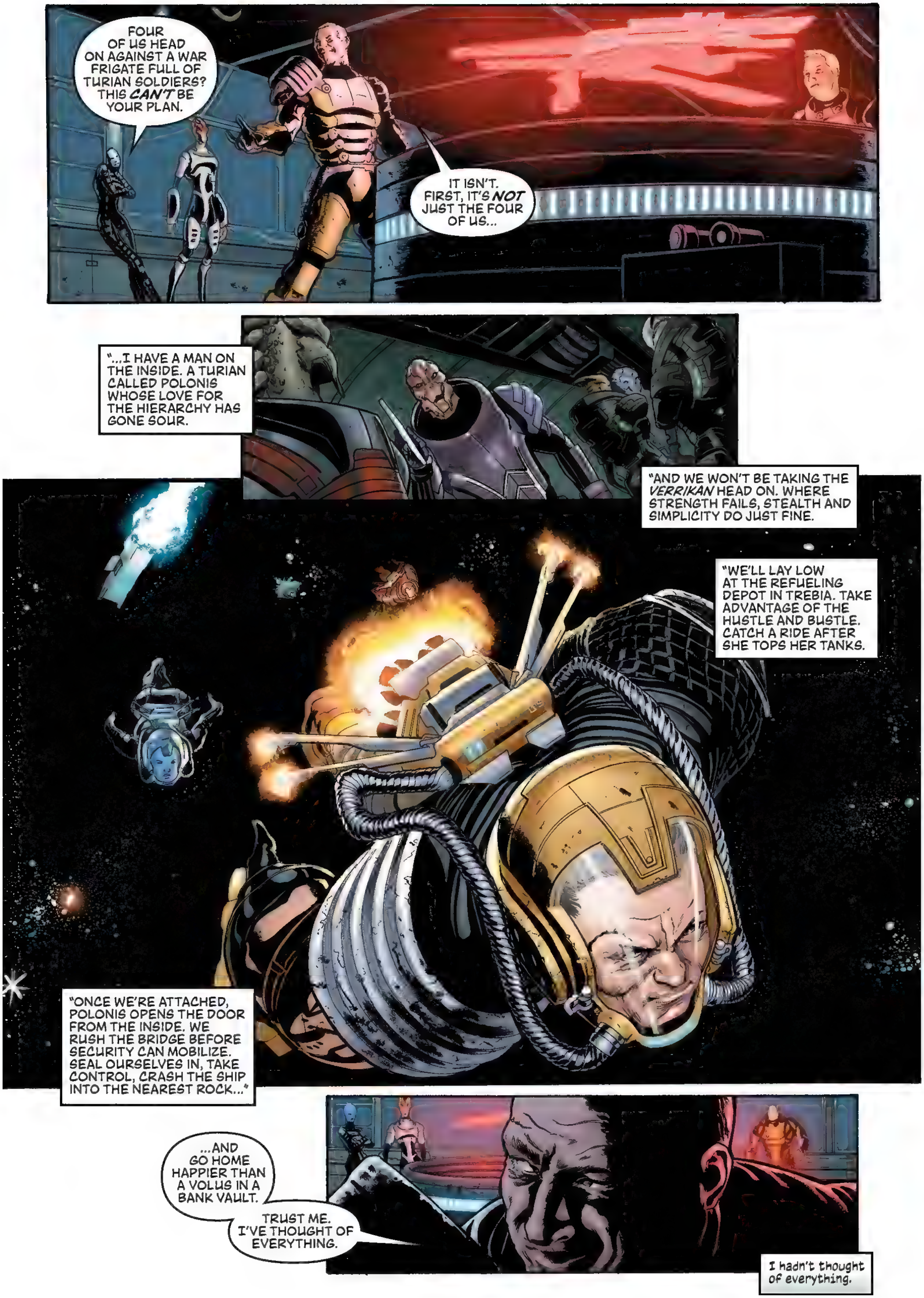

A SECRET CERBERUS FACILITY. HOME TO THE LAZARUS PROJECT.
MIRANDA! I NEED TO TALK TO YOU!
I'M SORRY, MISS LAWSON -- I TOLD HER SHE WASN'T CLEARED YET TO LEAVE MED BAY, BUT SHE KNOCKED OUT THE ORDERLIES --
DID *YOU* SIGN THE ORDER EXTENDING MY MEDICAL OBSERVATION *INDEFINITELY?*
I DID. UNTIL WE DETERMINE THE NATURE AND THE SOURCE OF THE SUBSTANCE THAT POISONED YOU -- AND WHETHER IT'S COMPLETELY FLUSHED FROM YOUR SYSTEM -- YOU'RE TO REMAIN UNDER SUPERVISION.
IT'S FOR YOUR OWN PROTECTION.
PROTECTION?! AM I STILL A CERBERUS AGENT...OR AM I YOUR PRISONER NOW?
YOU OWE ME AN EXPLANATION!
DO I? PERHAPS *YOU'D* LIKE TO EXPLAIN WHY YOU HAVEN'T FINISHED COMPILING THE DATA ON THE SHEPHERD TEAM --
I'M FIELD READY! GIVING ME RESEARCH HOMEWORK IS A WASTE OF MY ABILITIES --
-- OR WHY YOU'VE BEEN TRYING TO ACCESS *RESTRICTED* FILES RELATING TO LAZARUS. REPEATEDLY.
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT.
STAY ON POINT, *RASA.* AND REMEMBER ONE THING...
...CERBERUS DOESN'T *TAKE* PRISONERS.

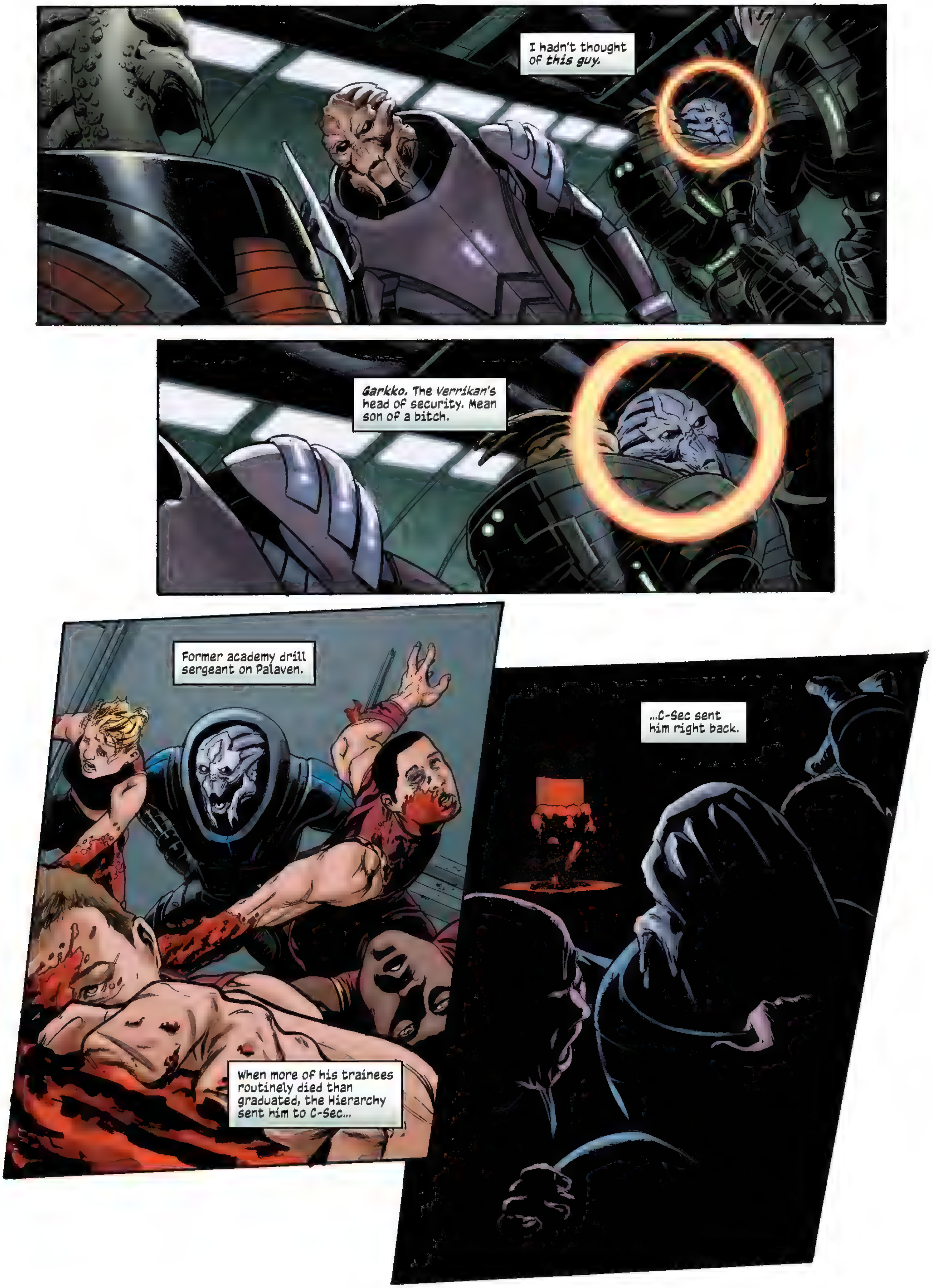

CERBERUS DOSSIER -- ZAEED MASSANI.
SOURCE: OPERATIVE SURVEILLANCE RECORDINGS, AFTERLIFE CLUB. OMEGA.
What do *I* know about hijacking turian war frigates?
Right then, you might think, *"Not a whole helluva lot."*
You'd be surprised what you pick up when you're seconds away from falling to your death.
Buy me another round and I'll tell you how it all started...

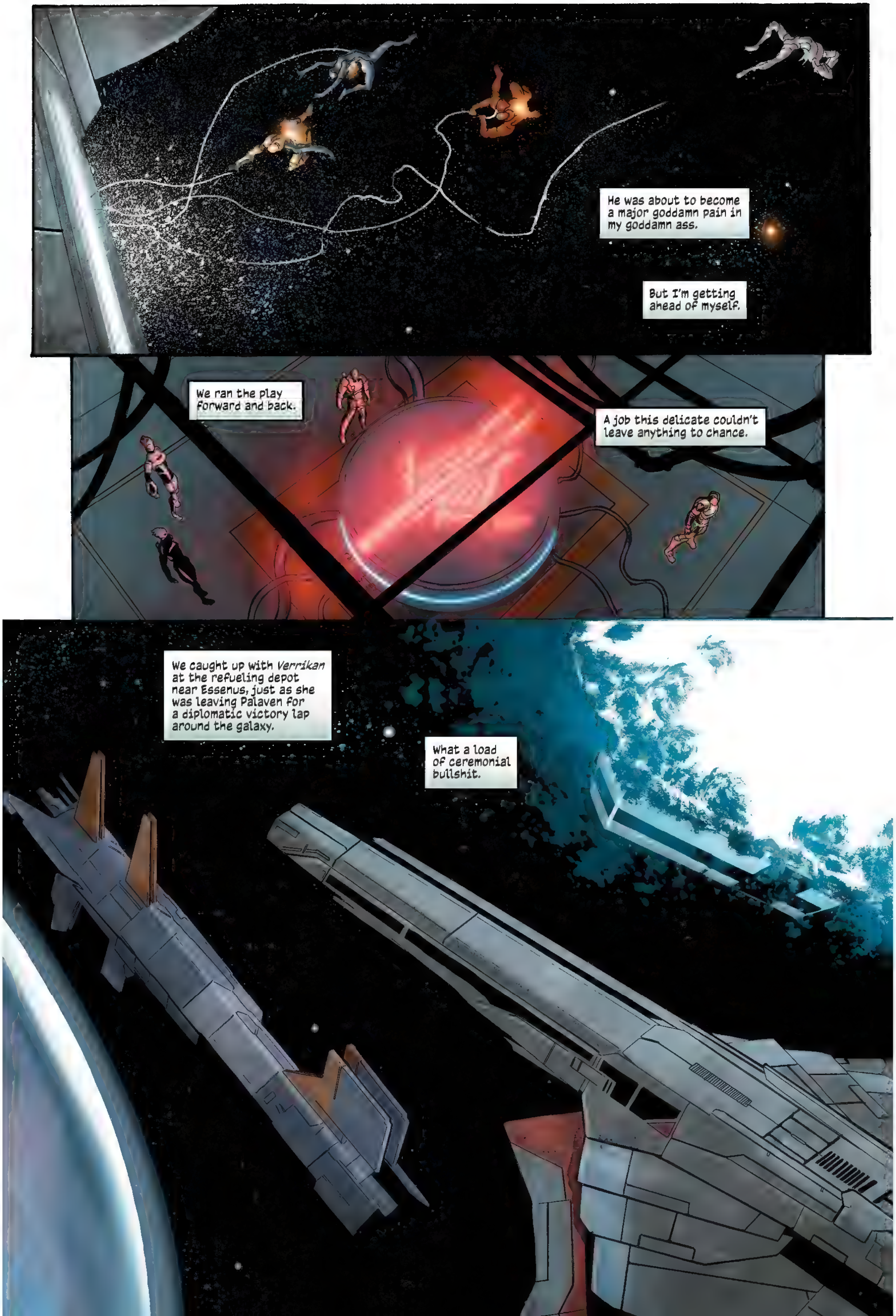

...See, I used to head this gang.
Excuse me -- *"private security outfit."* The Blue Suns.
Gun running. Extortion. A little arson on the side. Knocking heads that needed knocking.
A pretty good operation, if I say so.
Some in the crew wanted to get involved in the batarian slave trade. I didn't think it was a good idea.
So like any other civil organized body, we respectfully discussed our differences and had a vote.
I was overruled.
But I took it well.
Most guys my age can't handle a career change this late in life. I adjusted just fine.
It almost got to where I could go a whole day without thinking about revenge.
Still, you know how people like to run their goddamn mouths.
"Massani's washed up," they'd say. "I wouldn't hire him to scrape the vermin shit out of a trash block."
Really spiteful shit.

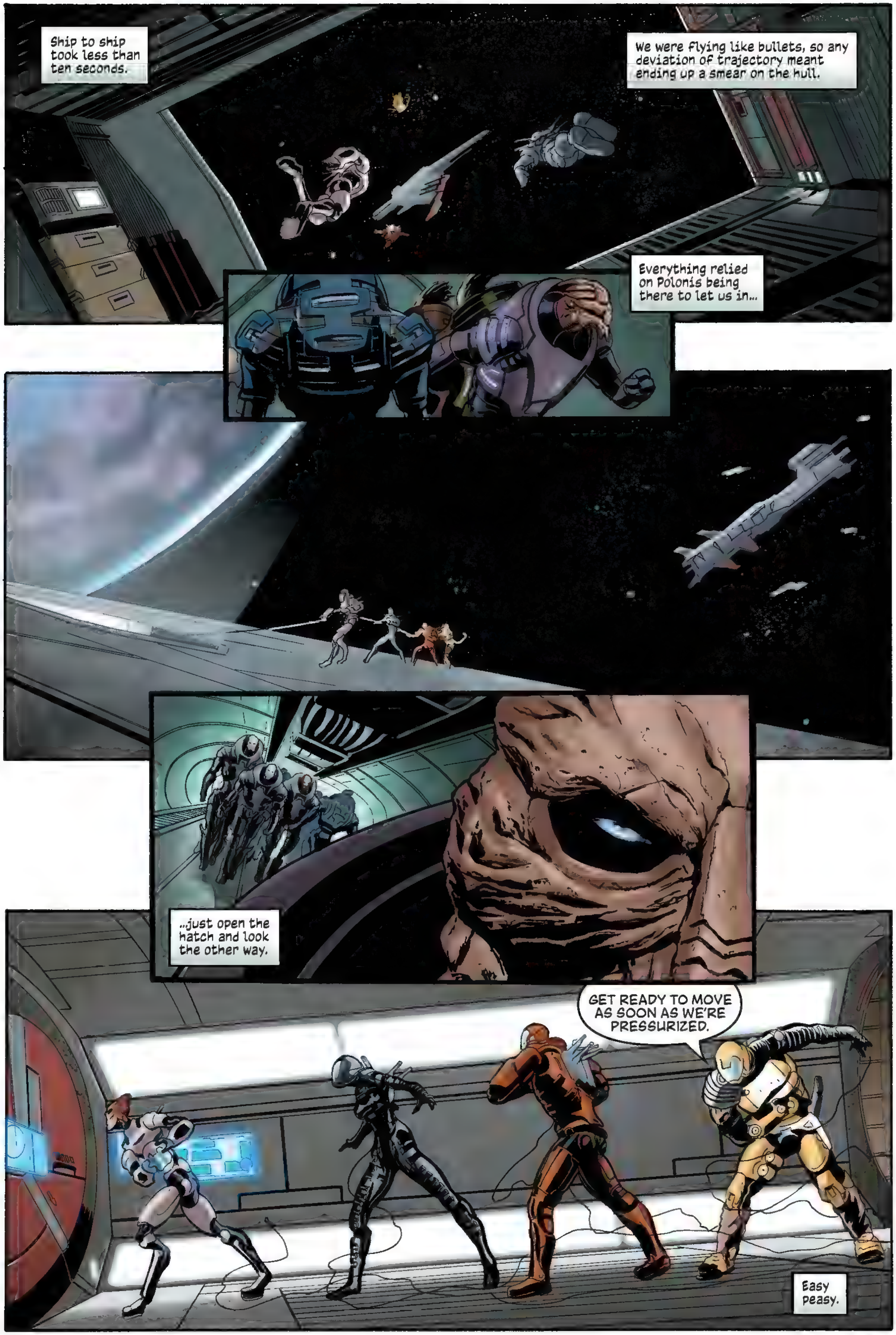

I pulled it together. Started taking jobs off the wire as an independent contractor. Got on the *Shadow Broker's* good side.
I got by, but I needed to get back on *top*. Restore my name and my reputation.
The only way to do that when you start from nothing is to go big.
I HAVE JUST THE JOB FOR YOU...
"...IT'S CALLED THE *VERRIKAN.*
"FLAGSHIP OF THE TURIANS' EIGHTH FLEET. PRIDE OF THE HIERARCHY. IT HAS SURVIVED MORE BATTLES AND LED MORE VICTORIES THAN ANY OTHER.
"YOU'RE GOING TO *CRASH* IT."
WELL, THEY DON'T COME BIGGER THAN KNOCKING A TURIAN WAR BIRD OUT OF HER OWN SKY.
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO DO IT?
GET CREATIVE. THE HOW AND THE WHERE DON'T MATTER -- ONLY THAT IT NOT GO DOWN QUIETLY OR DISCREETLY.
MY CLIENT WANTS TO MAKE AN EXAMPLE OF THE VERRIKAN, TO EMBARRASS THE TURIANS...AND THEY'RE WILLING TO PAY A LARGE FORTUNE FOR THE PLEASURE.
THAT JUST SO HAPPENS TO BE WHAT I CHARGE.

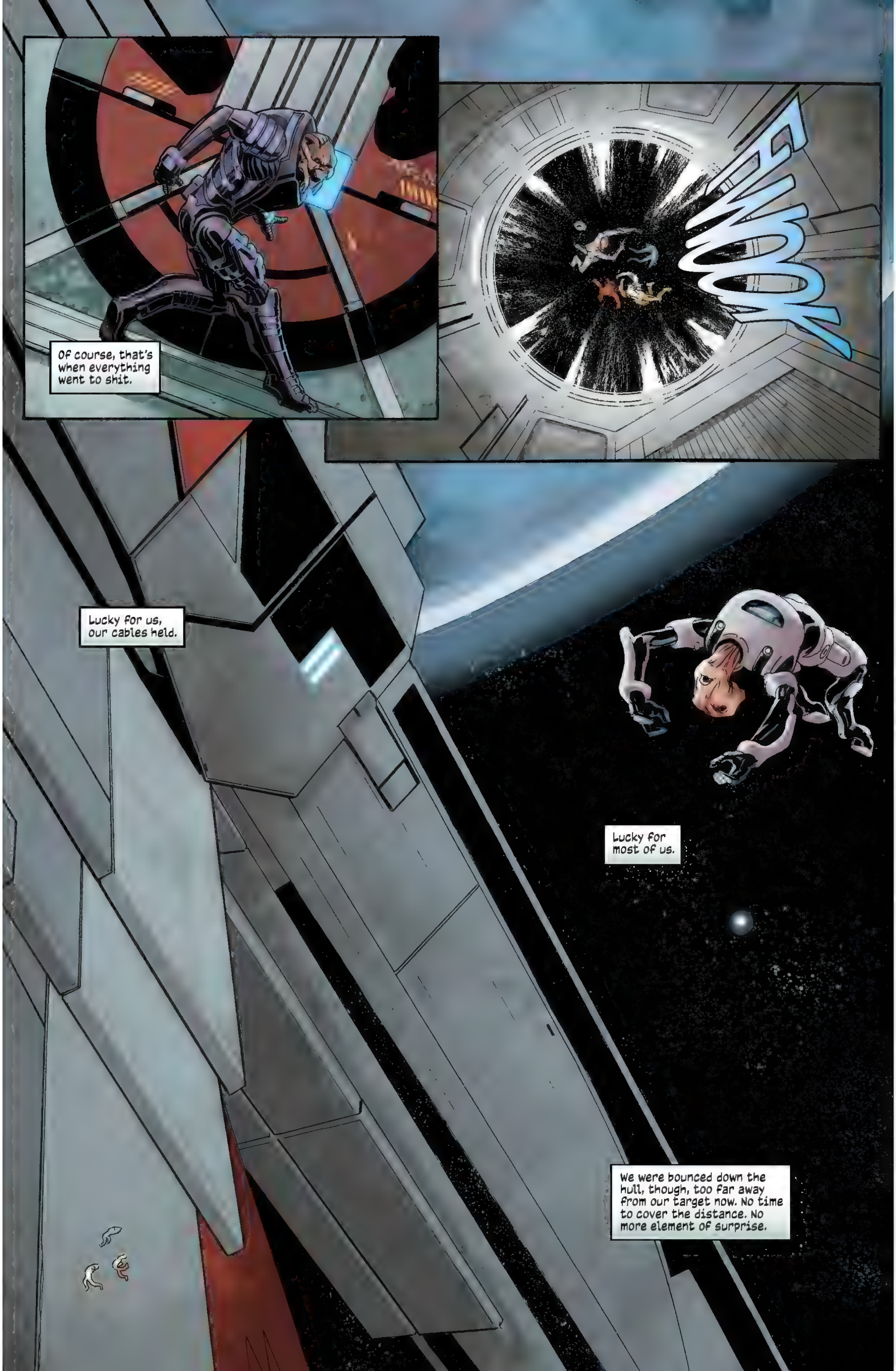

First things first -- I had to put together a crew. Tapping the merc gangs was out of the question -- it had to be freelancers.
Kendo Holin. Salarian tech specialist. Sadistic little bastard but smart enough not to antagonize the people who pay him.
I'M INTERESTED. GIVE ME SOME TIME TO FINISH MY PROJECT HERE FIRST.
AYOR
THAT DOESN'T SOUND LIKE THE KIND OF THING YOU WALK AWAY FROM.
The asari's called Tristana. Formerly a Justicar. Currently a very prolific assassin. One stone-cold bitch.
We had a thing once. I broke it off before it killed me.
PLIF
IT'S NOT. YOU MAKE IT THROUGH TO THE END, YOU RUN LIKE HELL. INCREDIBLE PAYOUT, BUT WE'LL BE EARNING EVERY CREDIT.
I'm still not sure it won't.
The kid's name is *Jace Reyn.* Former Blue Sun. Stuck by me when the shit went down.
A bit green around the gills, but strong as a varren and twice as loyal.
SO, WAS I RIGHT? SHE'S AN M-8 -- PIMPED OUT WITH JUST ABOUT EVERY MOD YOU CAN GET AND SOME YOU CAN'T.
I CALL HER *"BESSIE."*
Also my biggest fan. Whether I liked it or not.

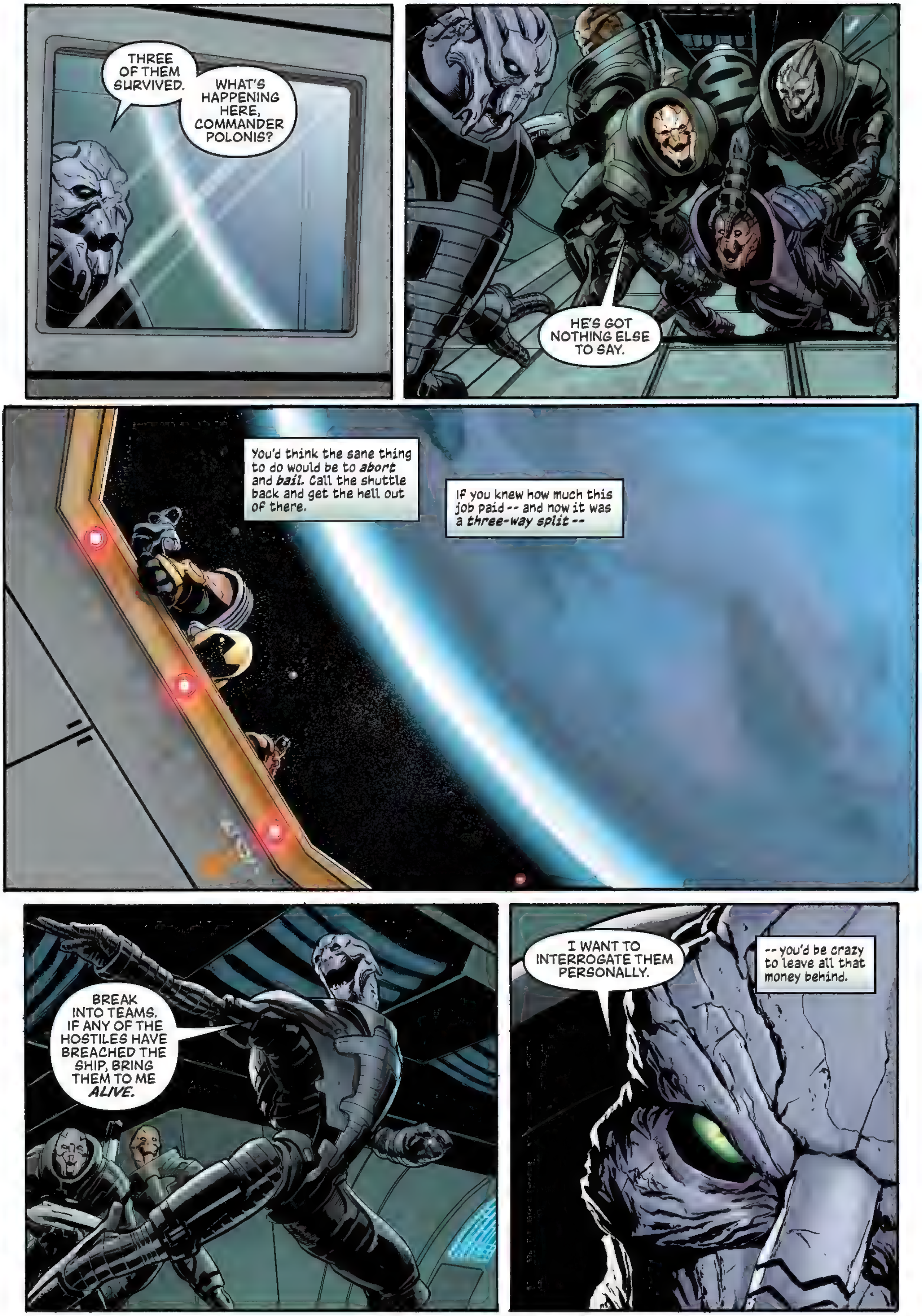

FOUR OF US HEAD ON AGAINST A WAR FRIGATE FULL OF TURIAN SOLDIERS? THIS *CAN'T* BE YOUR PLAN.
IT ISN'T. FIRST, IT'S *NOT* JUST THE FOUR OF US...
"...I HAVE A MAN ON THE INSIDE. A TURIAN CALLED POLONIS WHOSE LOVE FOR THE HIERARCHY HAS GONE SOUR.
"AND WE WON'T BE TAKING THE *VERRIKAN* HEAD ON. WHERE STRENGTH FAILS, STEALTH AND SIMPLICITY DO JUST FINE.
"WE'LL LAY LOW AT THE REFUELING DEPOT IN TREBIA. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE. CATCH A RIDE AFTER SHE TOPS HER TANKS.
"ONCE WE'RE ATTACHED, POLONIS OPENS THE DOOR FROM THE INSIDE. WE RUSH THE BRIDGE BEFORE SECURITY CAN MOBILIZE. SEAL OURSELVES IN, TAKE CONTROL, CRASH THE SHIP INTO THE NEAREST ROCK..."
...AND GO HOME HAPPIER THAN A VOLUS IN A BANK VAULT.
TRUST ME. I'VE THOUGHT OF EVERYTHING.
I hadn't thought of everything.

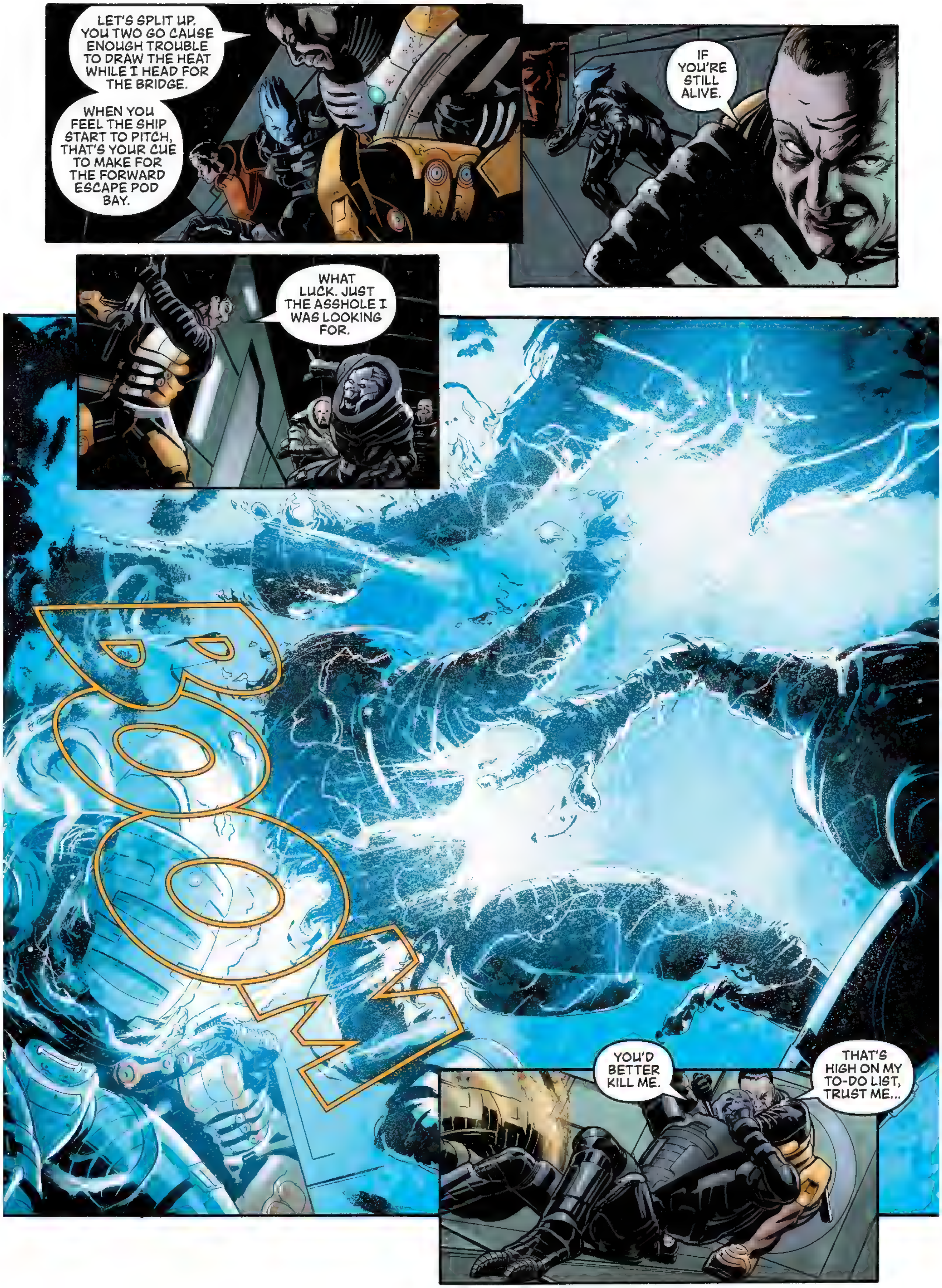

I hadn't thought of *this guy.*
Garkko. The *Verrikan's* head of security. Mean son of a bitch.
Former academy drill sergeant on Palaven.
When more of his trainees routinely died than graduated, the Hierarchy sent him to C-Sec...
...C-Sec sent him right back.

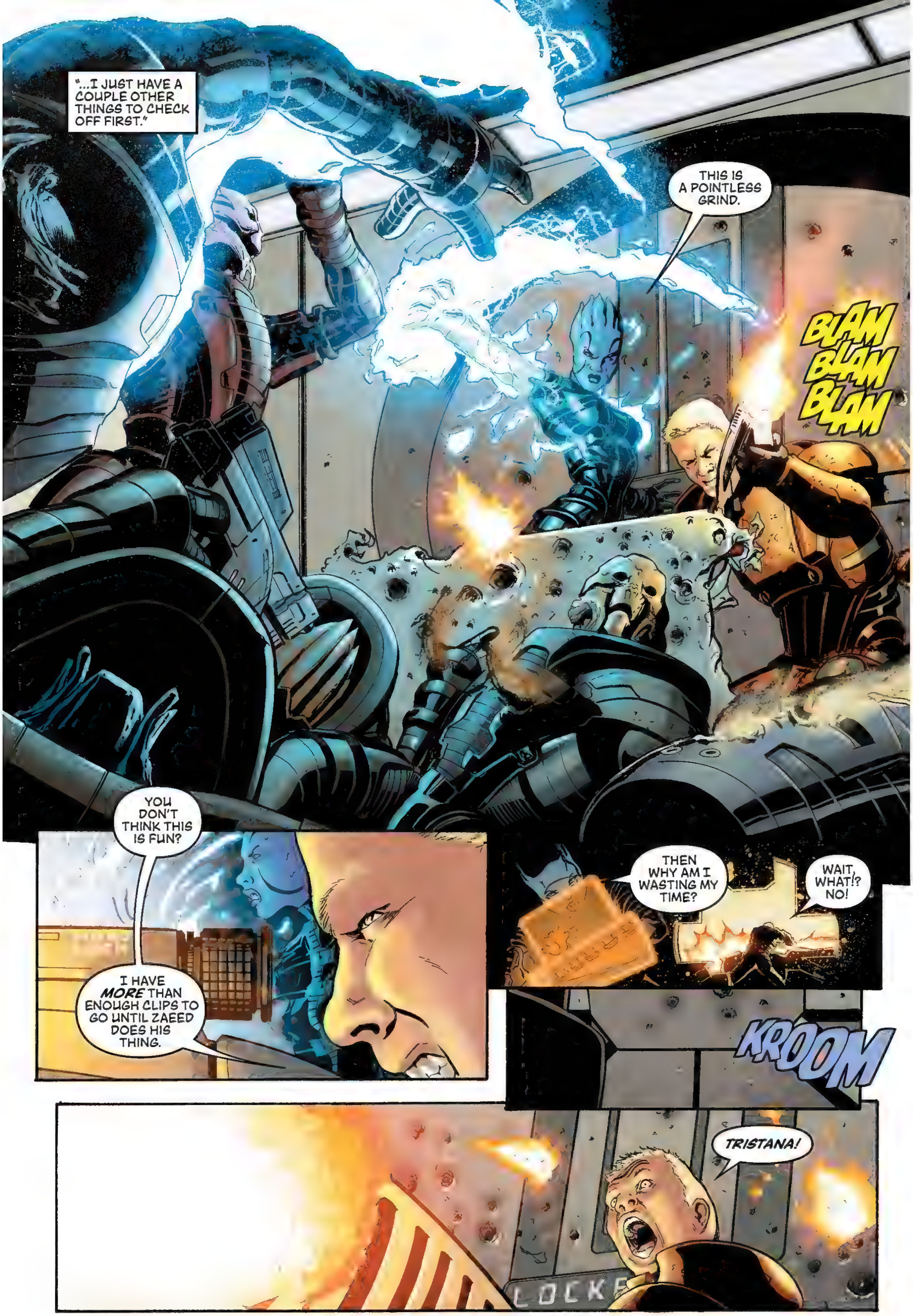

He was about to become a major goddamn pain in my goddamn ass.
But I'm getting ahead of myself.
We ran the play forward and back.
A job this delicate couldn't leave anything to chance.
We caught up with *Verrikan* at the refueling depot near Essenus, just as she was leaving Palaven for a diplomatic victory lap around the galaxy.
What a load of ceremonial bullshit.

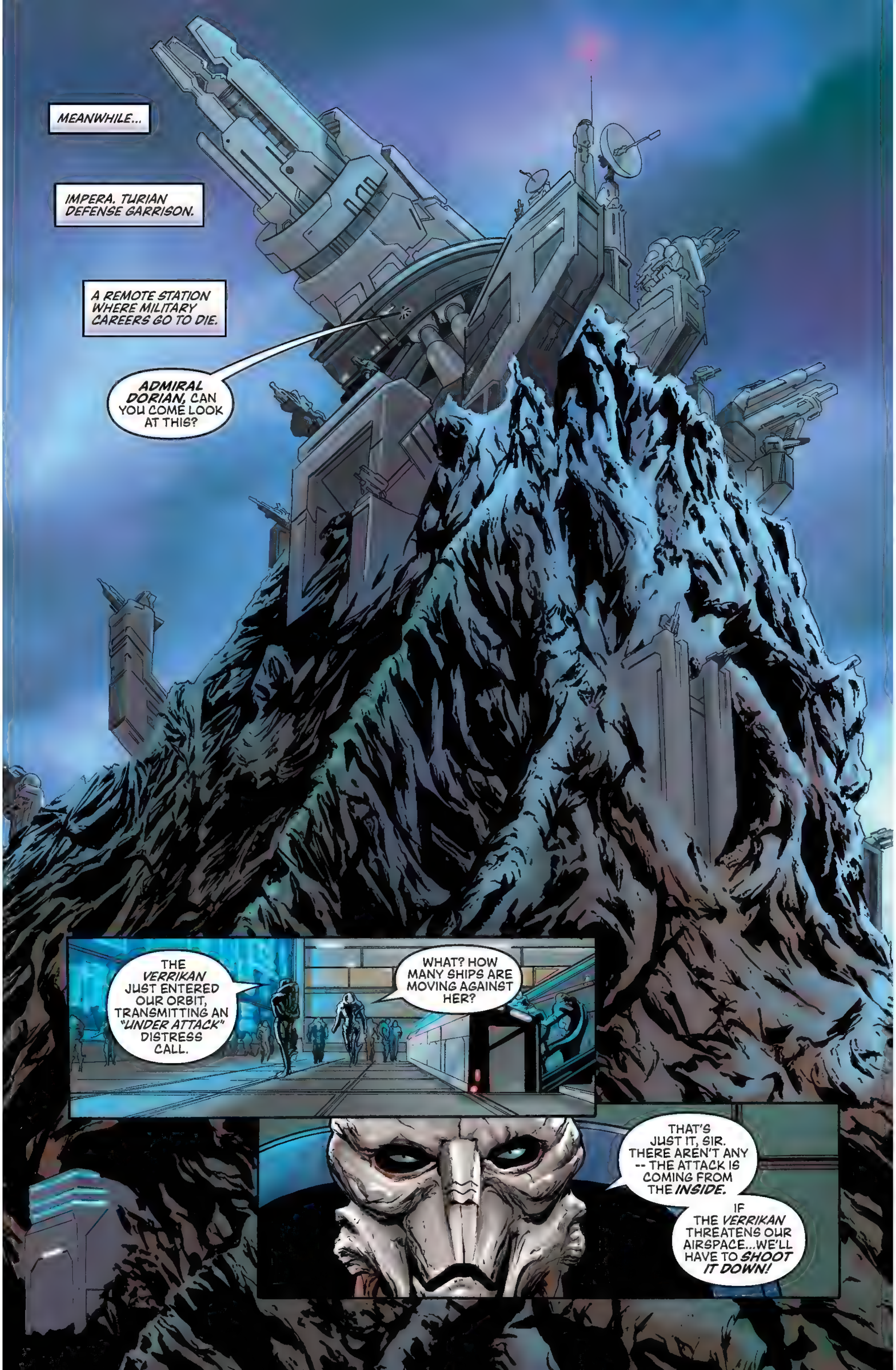

Ship to ship took less than ten seconds.
We were flying like bullets, so any deviation of trajectory meant ending up a smear on the hull.
Everything relied on Polonis being there to let us in...
..just open the hatch and look the other way.
GET READY TO MOVE AS SOON AS WE'RE PRESSURIZED.
Easy peasy.

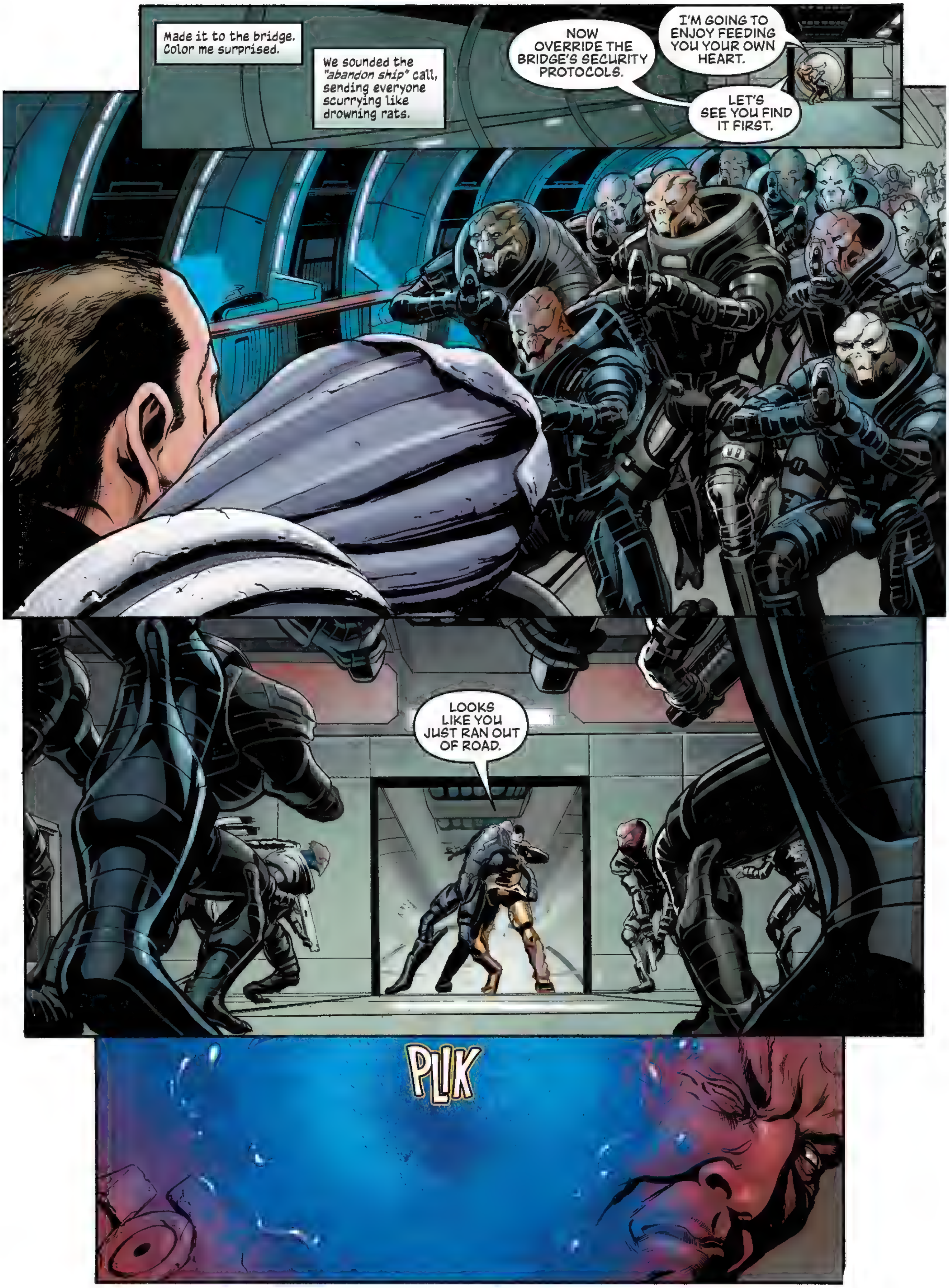

Of course, that's when everything went to shit.
FWOOK
Lucky for us, our cables held.
Lucky for most of us.
We were bounced down the hull, though, too far away from our target now. No time to cover the distance. No more element of surprise.

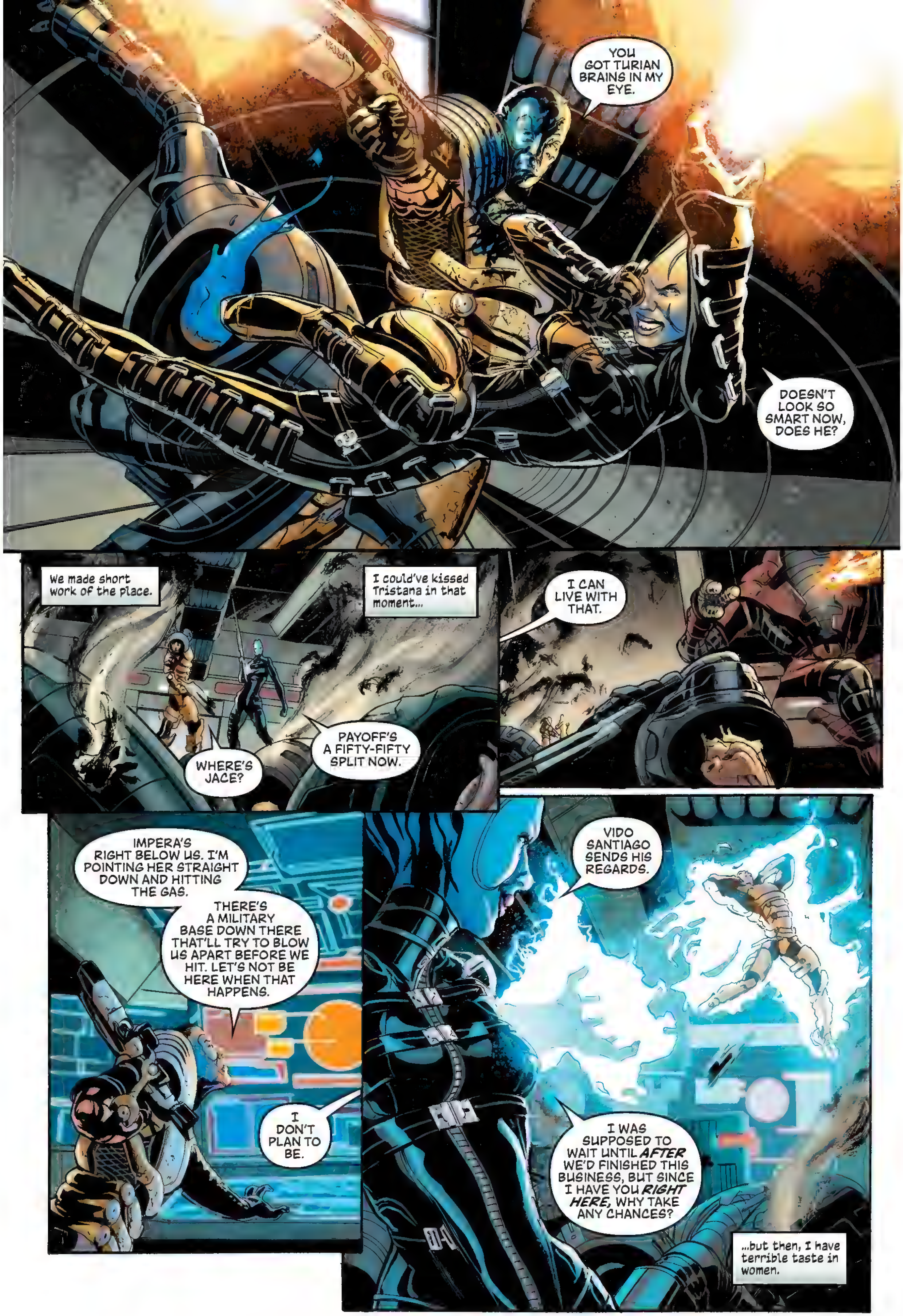

THREE OF THEM SURVIVED.
WHAT'S HAPPENING HERE, COMMANDER POLONIS?
HE'S GOT NOTHING ELSE TO SAY.
You'd think the sane thing to do would be to *abort* and *bail*. Call the shuttle back and get the hell out of there.
If you knew how much this job paid -- and now it was a *three-way split* --
BREAK INTO TEAMS. IF ANY OF THE HOSTILES HAVE BREACHED THE SHIP, BRING THEM TO ME *ALIVE*.
I WANT TO INTERROGATE THEM PERSONALLY.
-- you'd be crazy to leave all that money behind.

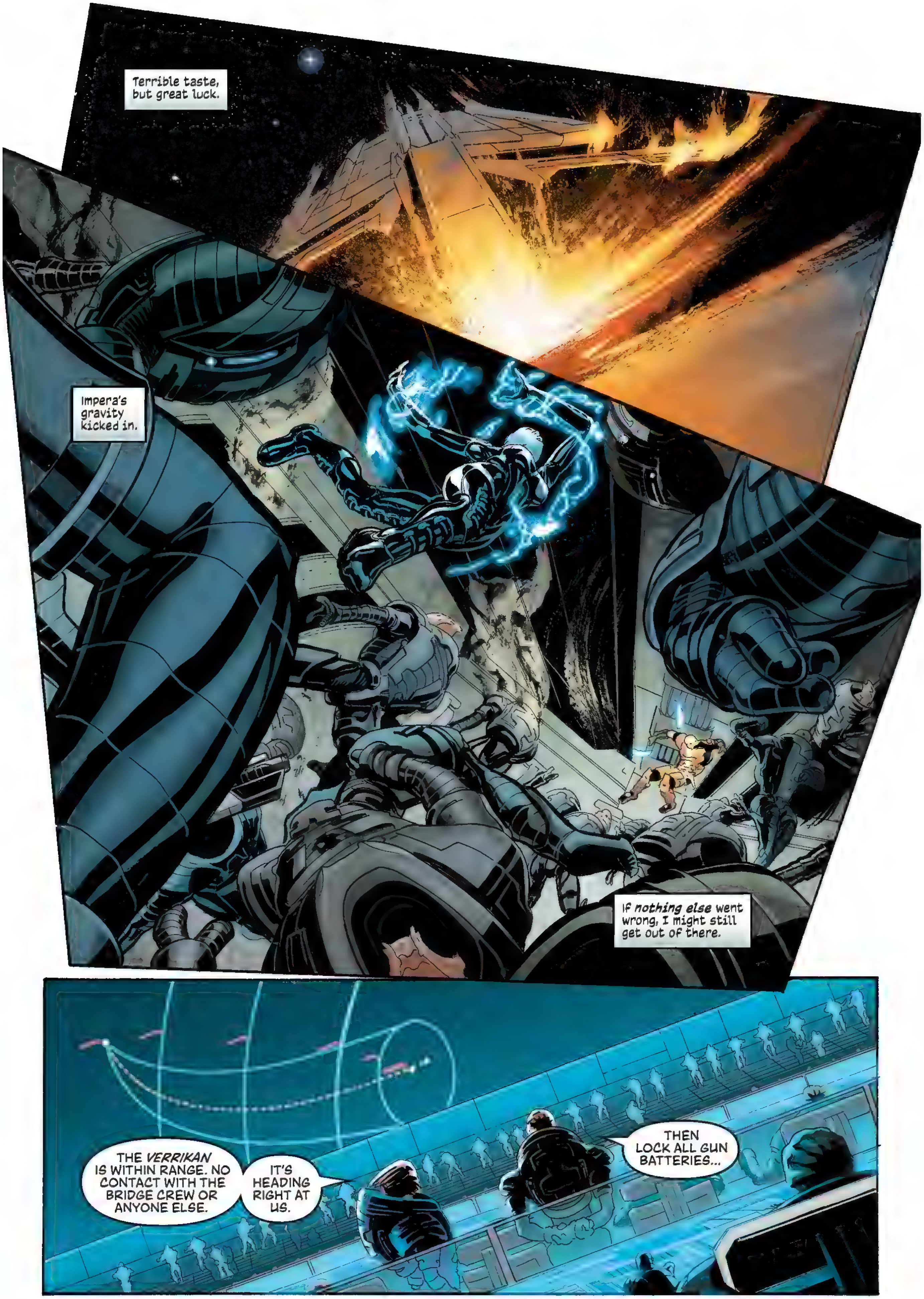

LET'S SPLIT UP. YOU TWO GO CAUSE ENOUGH TROUBLE TO DRAW THE HEAT WHILE I HEAD FOR THE BRIDGE.
WHEN YOU FEEL THE SHIP START TO PITCH, THAT'S YOUR CUE TO MAKE FOR THE FORWARD ESCAPE POD BAY.
IF YOU'RE STILL ALIVE.
WHAT LUCK. JUST THE ASSHOLE I WAS LOOKING FOR.
BOOM
YOU'D BETTER KILL ME.
THAT'S HIGH ON MY TO-DO LIST, TRUST ME...

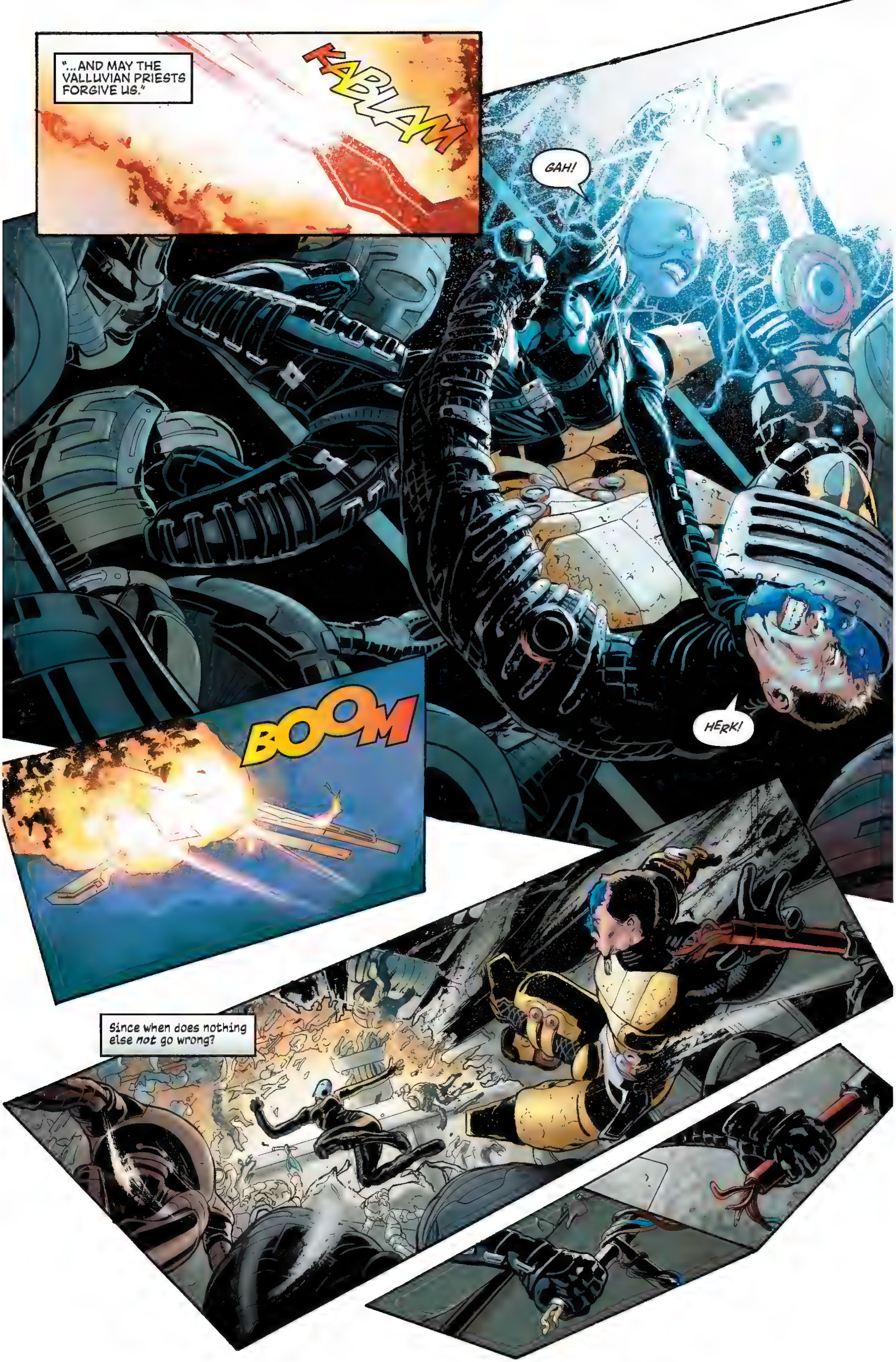

"...I JUST HAVE A COUPLE OTHER THINGS TO CHECK OFF FIRST."
THIS IS A POINTLESS GRIND.
BLAM BLAM BLAM
YOU DON'T THINK THIS IS FUN?
I HAVE *MORE* THAN ENOUGH CLIPS TO GO UNTIL ZAEED DOES HIS THING.
THEN WHY AM I WASTING MY TIME?
WAIT, WHAT!? NO!
KROOM
TRISTANA!
LOCKE

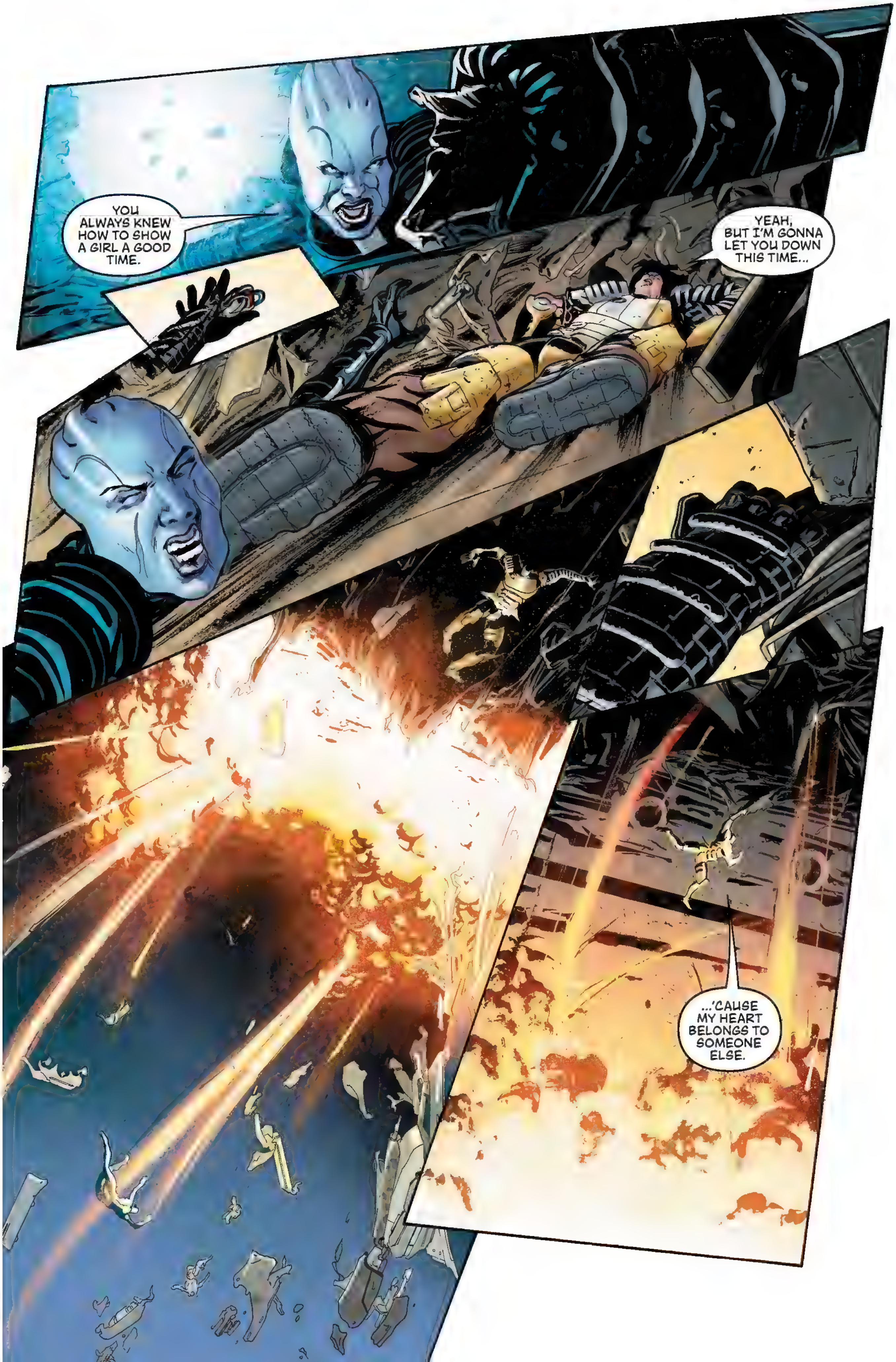

MEANWHILE...
IMPERA. TURIAN DEFENSE GARRISON.
A REMOTE STATION WHERE MILITARY CAREERS GO TO DIE.
ADMIRAL DORIAN, CAN YOU COME LOOK AT THIS?
THE *VERRIKAN* JUST ENTERED OUR ORBIT, TRANSMITTING AN *"UNDER ATTACK"* DISTRESS CALL.
WHAT? HOW MANY SHIPS ARE MOVING AGAINST HER?
THAT'S JUST IT, SIR. THERE AREN'T ANY -- THE ATTACK IS COMING FROM THE *INSIDE.*
IF THE *VERRIKAN* THREATENS OUR AIRSPACE...WE'LL HAVE TO ***SHOOT IT DOWN!***

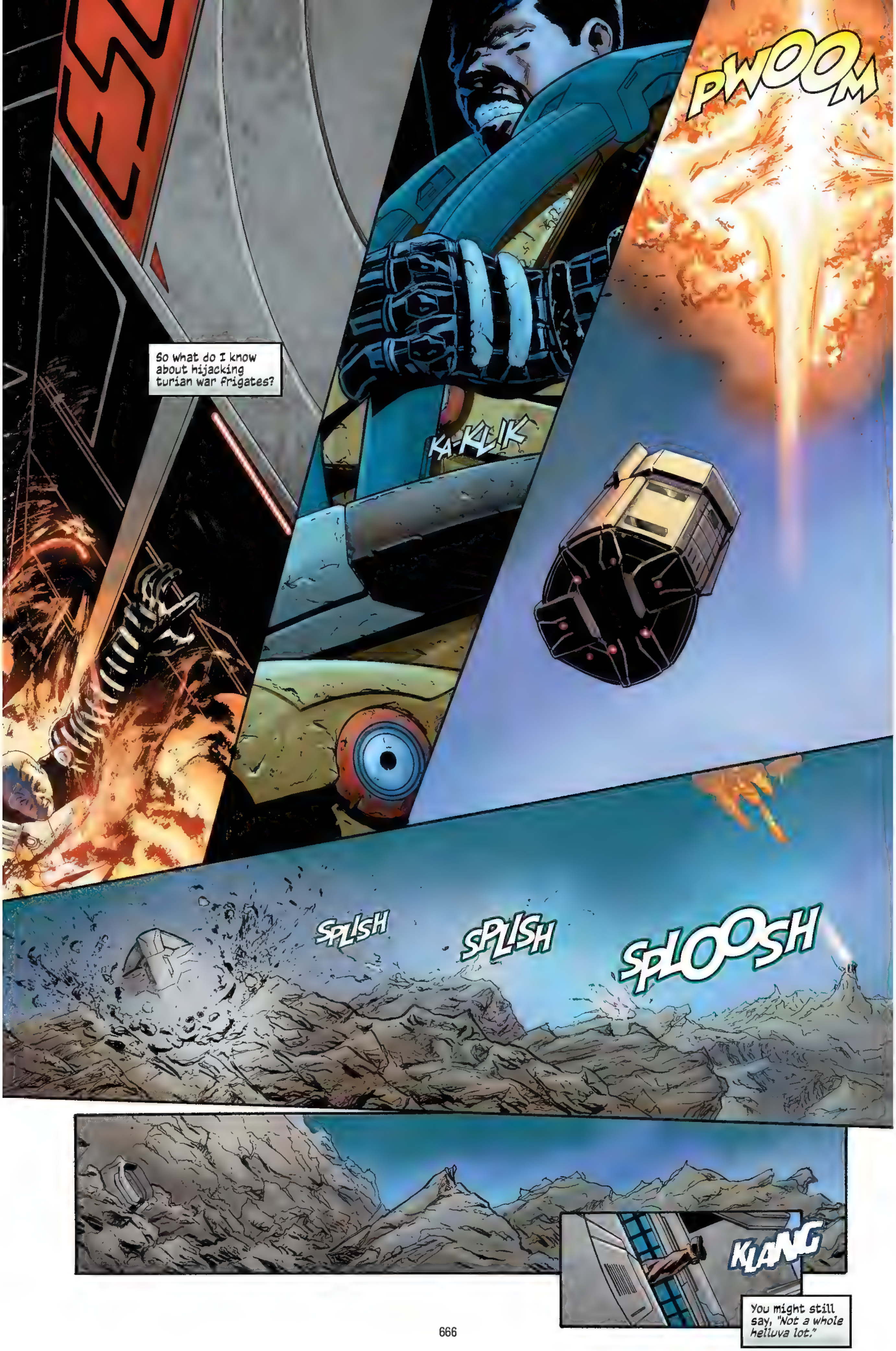

Made it to the bridge. Color me surprised.
We sounded the "abandon ship" call, sending everyone scurrying like drowning rats.
NOW OVERRIDE THE BRIDGE'S SECURITY PROTOCOLS.
I'M GOING TO ENJOY FEEDING YOU YOUR OWN HEART.
LET'S SEE YOU FIND IT FIRST.
LOOKS LIKE YOU JUST RAN OUT OF ROAD.
PLIK

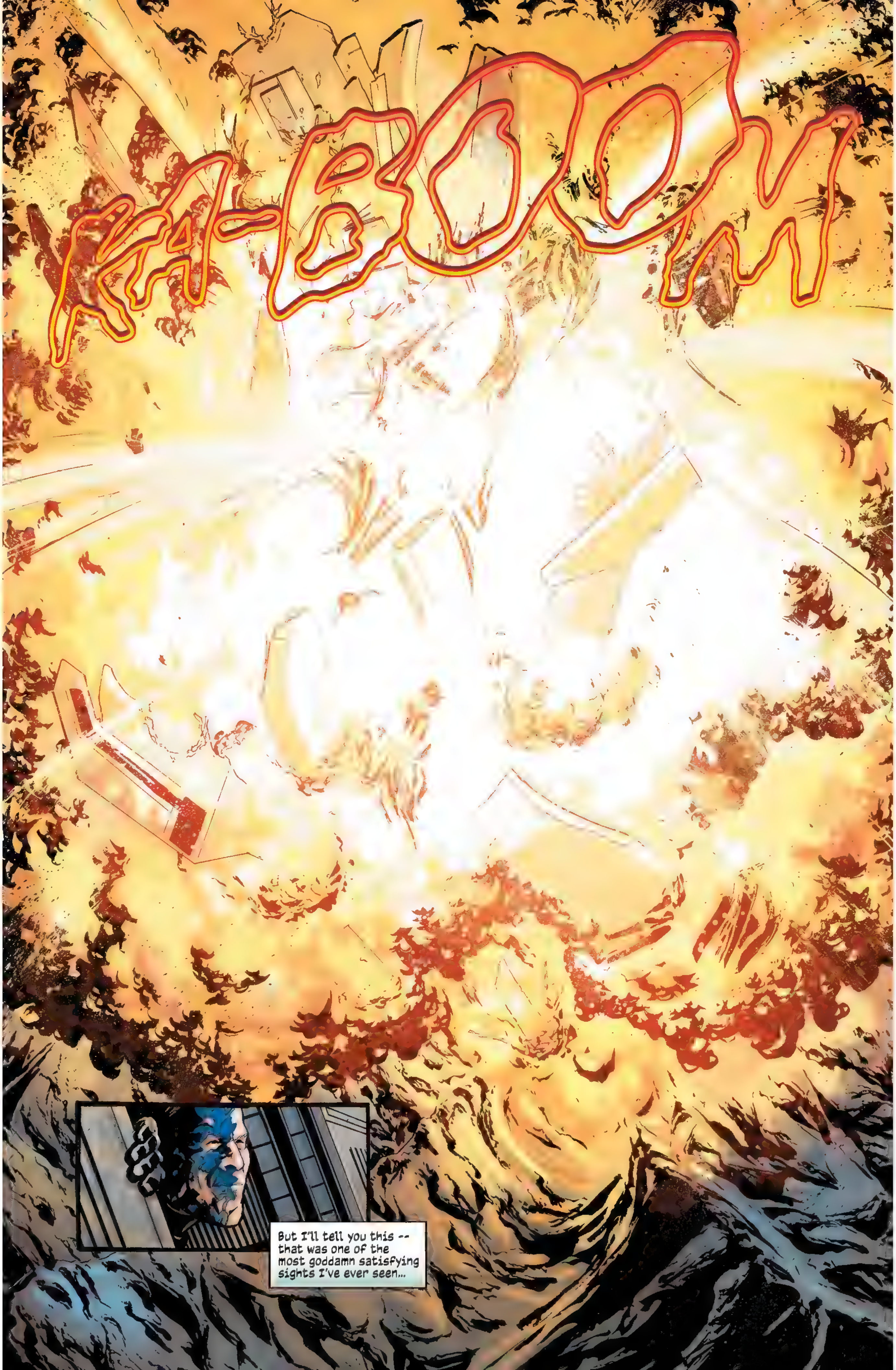

YOU GOT TURIAN BRAINS IN MY EYE.
DOESN'T LOOK SO SMART NOW, DOES HE?
We made short work of the place.
WHERE'S JACE?
PAYOFF'S A FIFTY-FIFTY SPLIT NOW.
I could've kissed Tristana in that moment...
I CAN LIVE WITH THAT.
IMPERA'S RIGHT BELOW US. I'M POINTING HER STRAIGHT DOWN AND HITTING THE GAS.
THERE'S A MILITARY BASE DOWN THERE THAT'LL TRY TO BLOW US APART BEFORE WE HIT. LET'S NOT BE HERE WHEN THAT HAPPENS.
I DON'T PLAN TO BE.
VIDO SANTIAGO SENDS HIS REGARDS.
I WAS SUPPOSED TO WAIT UNTIL *AFTER* WE'D FINISHED THIS BUSINESS, BUT SINCE I HAVE YOU *RIGHT HERE*, WHY TAKE ANY CHANCES?
...but then, I have terrible taste in women.

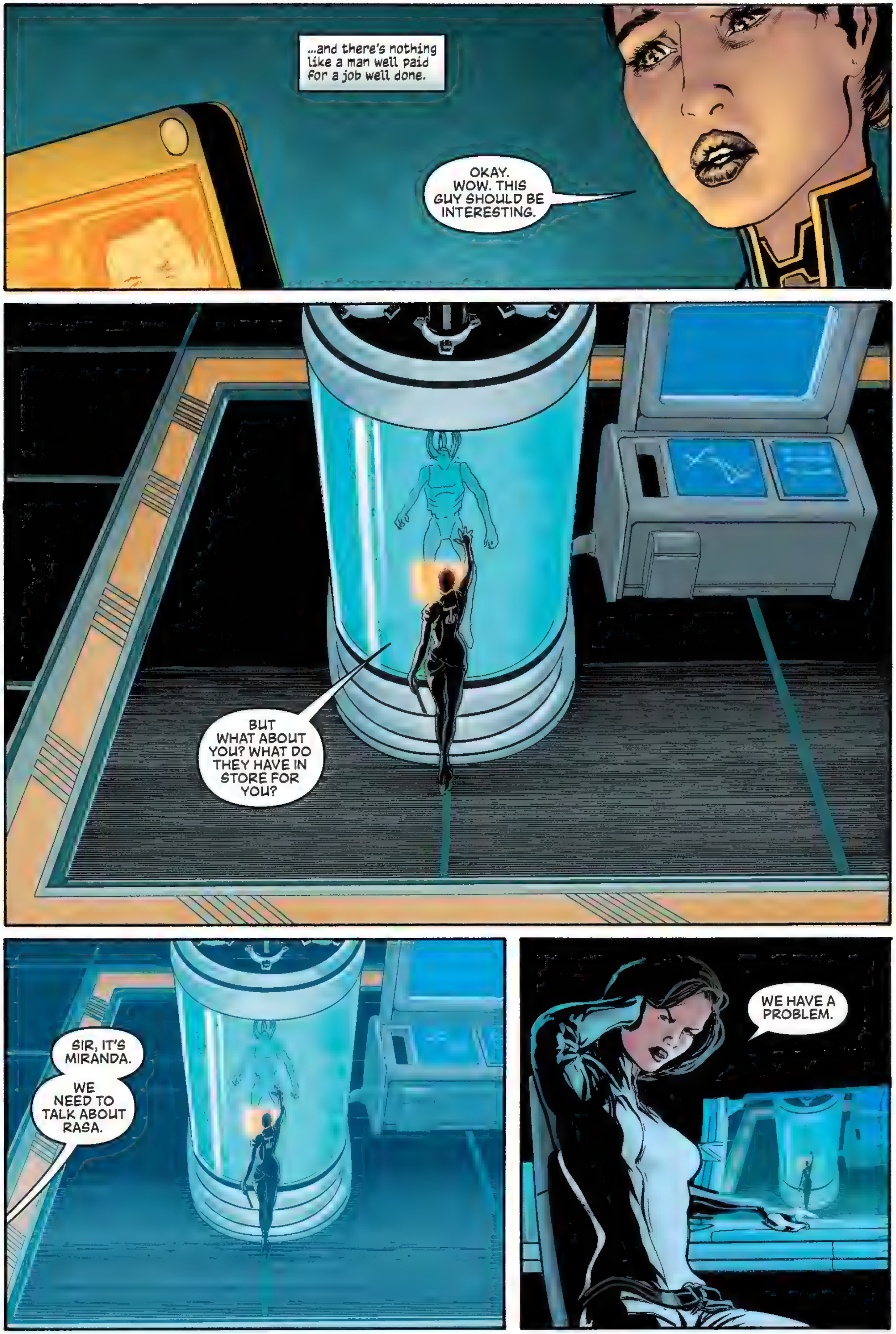

Terrible taste, but great luck.
Impera's gravity kicked in.
If *nothing else* went wrong, I might still get out of there.
THE *VERRIKAN* IS WITHIN RANGE. NO CONTACT WITH THE BRIDGE CREW OR ANYONE ELSE.
IT'S HEADING RIGHT AT US.
THEN LOCK ALL GUN BATTERIES...

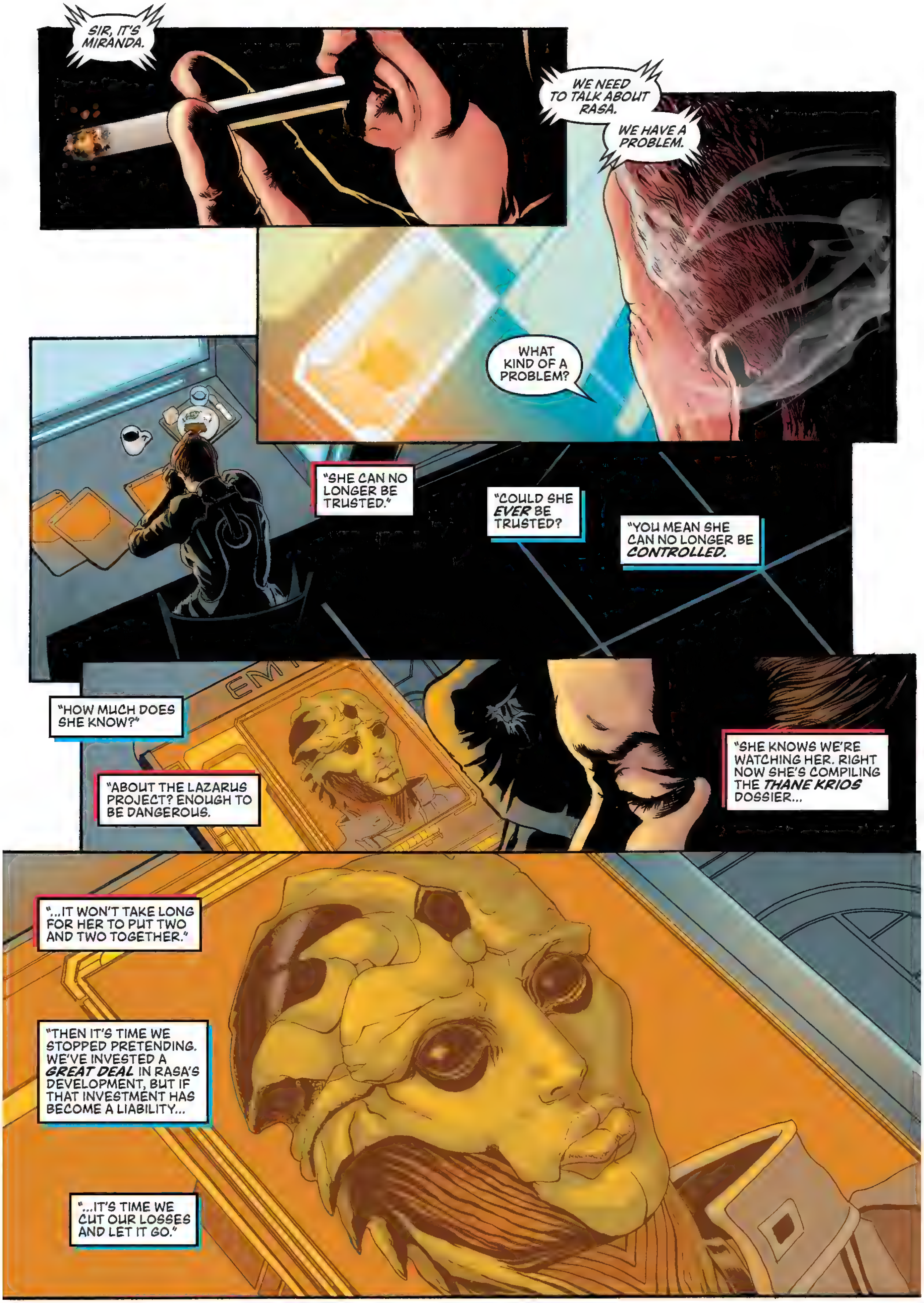

"...AND MAY THE VALLUVIAN PRIESTS FORGIVE US."
KABLAM
GAH!
HERK!
BOOM
Since when does nothing else *not* go wrong?

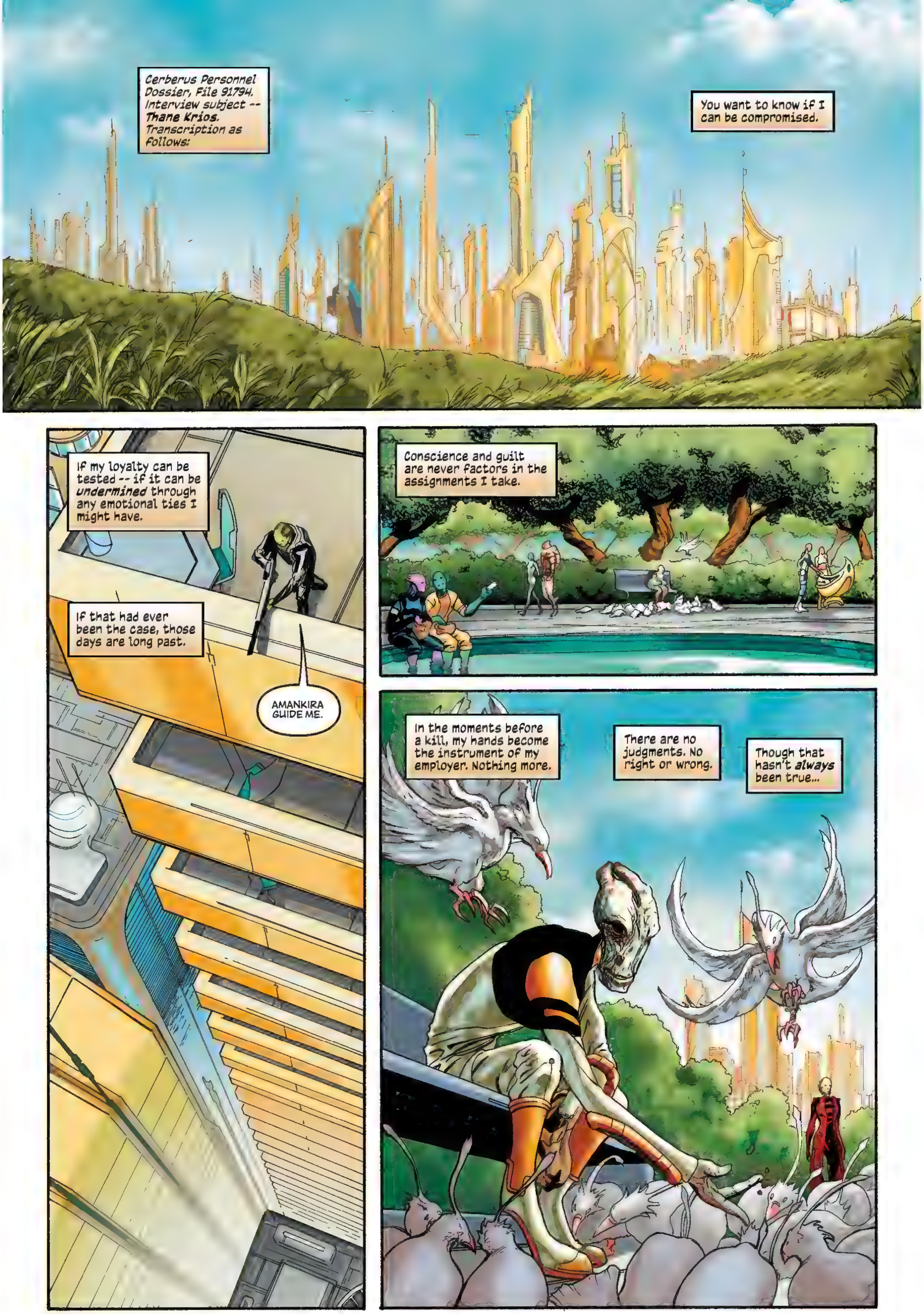

YOU ALWAYS KNEW HOW TO SHOW A GIRL A GOOD TIME.
YEAH, BUT I'M GONNA LET YOU DOWN THIS TIME...
...'CAUSE MY HEART BELONGS TO SOMEONE ELSE.

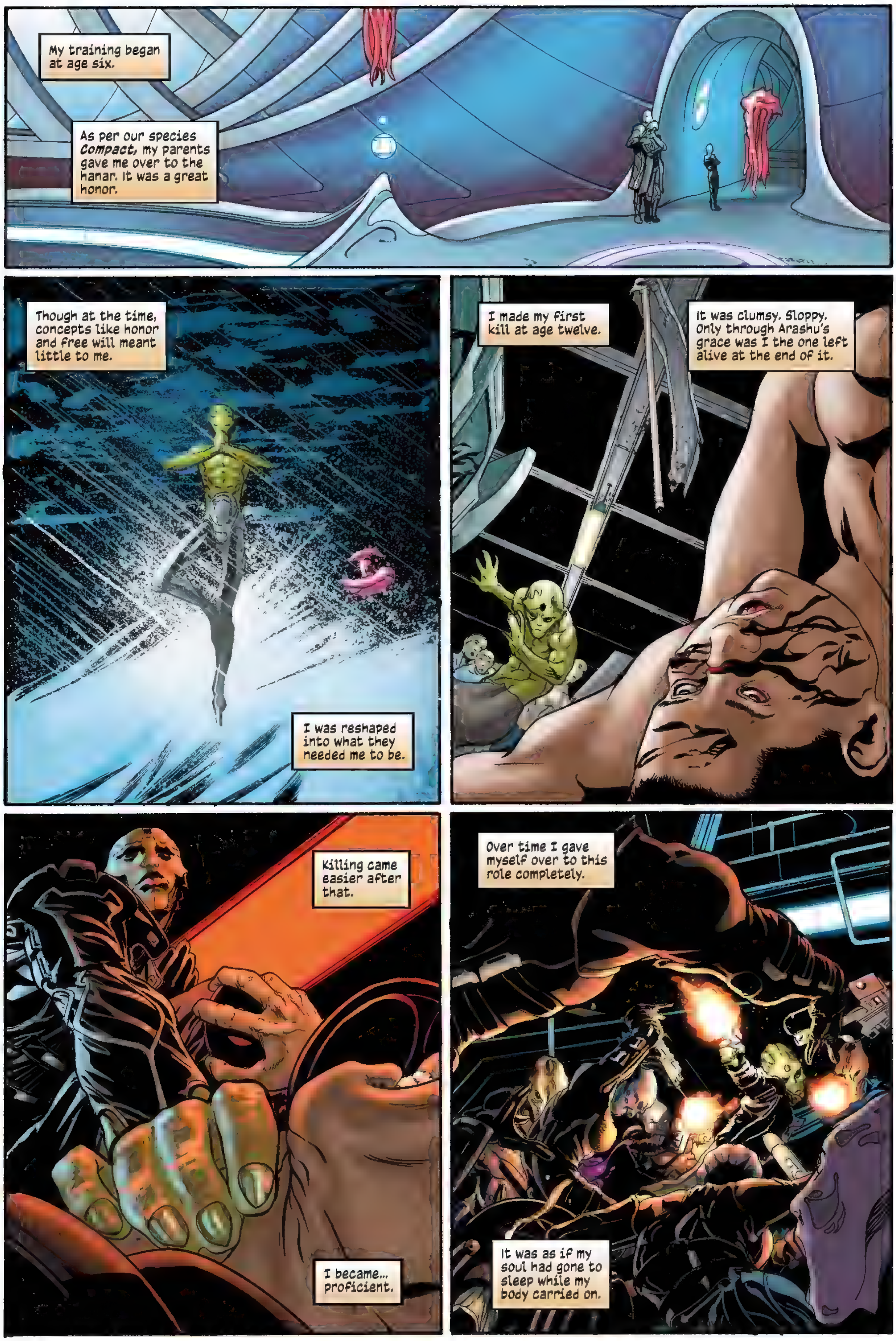

PWOOM
So what do I know about hijacking turian war frigates?
KA-KLIK
SPLISH
SPLISH
SPLOOSH
KLANG
You might still say, "Not a whole helluva lot."

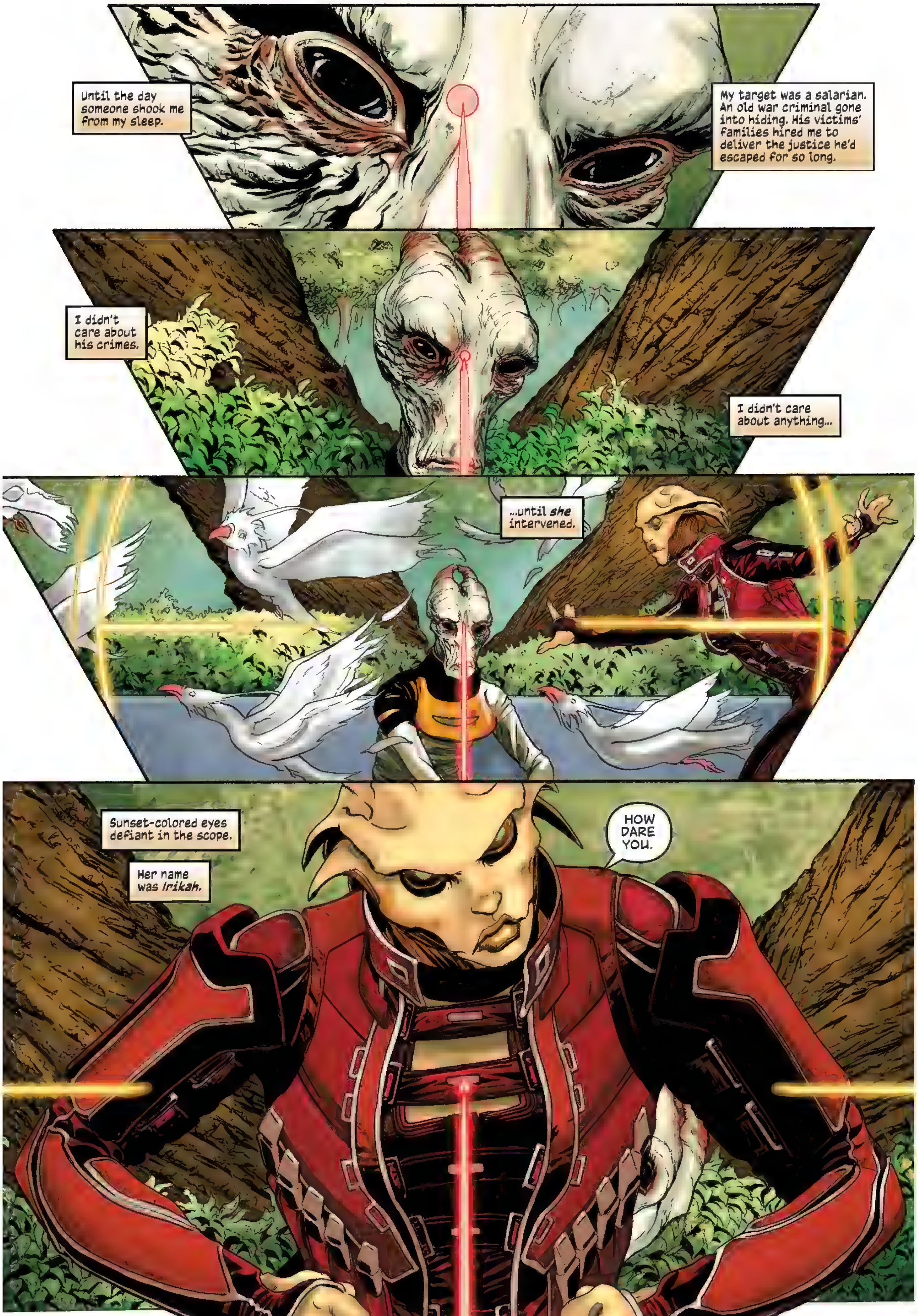

KA-BOOM
But I'll tell you this -- that was one of the most goddamn satisfying sights I've ever seen...

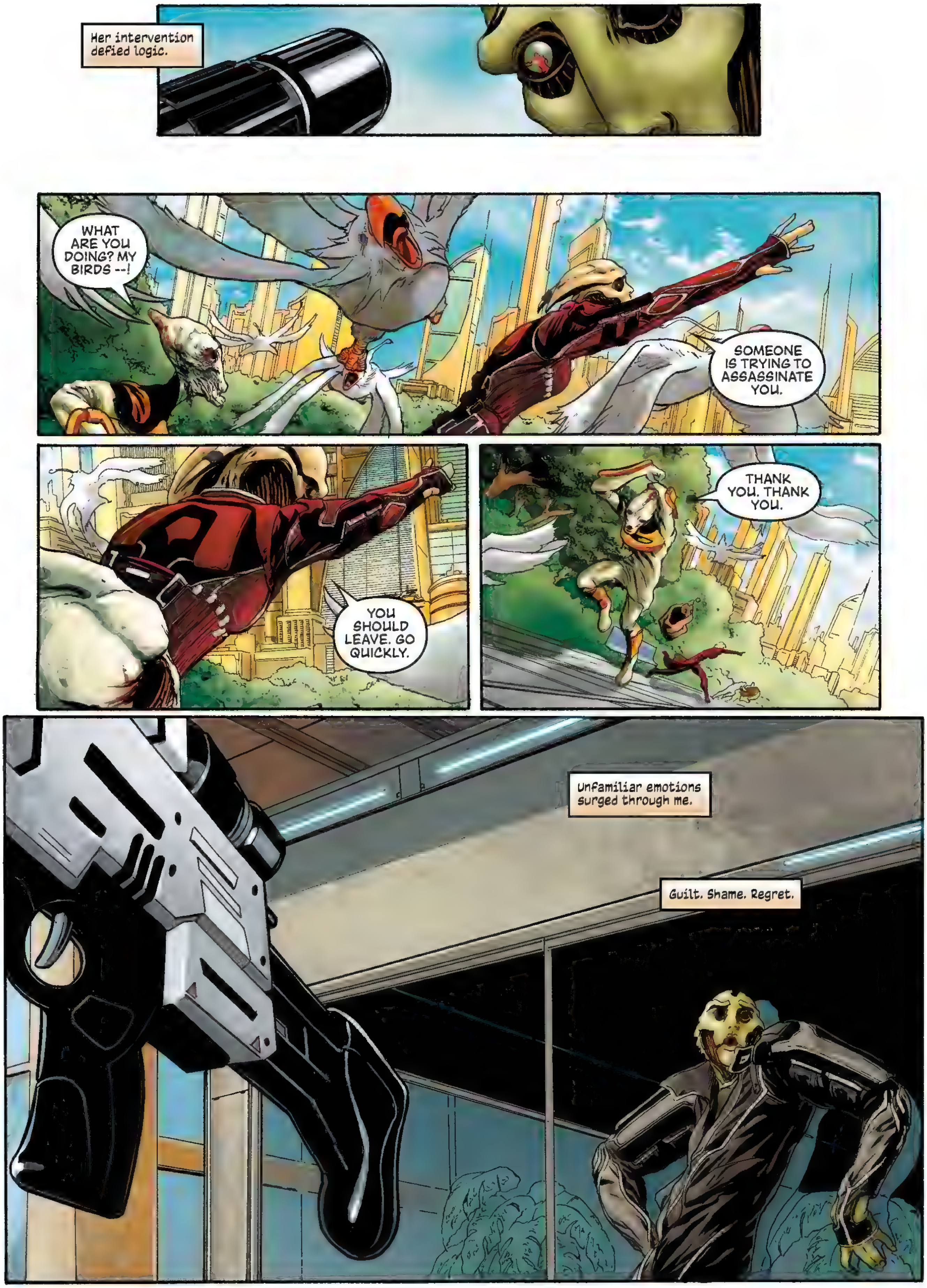

...and there's nothing like a man well paid for a job well done.
OKAY. WOW. THIS GUY SHOULD BE INTERESTING.
BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU? WHAT DO THEY HAVE IN STORE FOR YOU?
SIR, IT'S MIRANDA.
WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT RASA.
WE HAVE A PROBLEM.

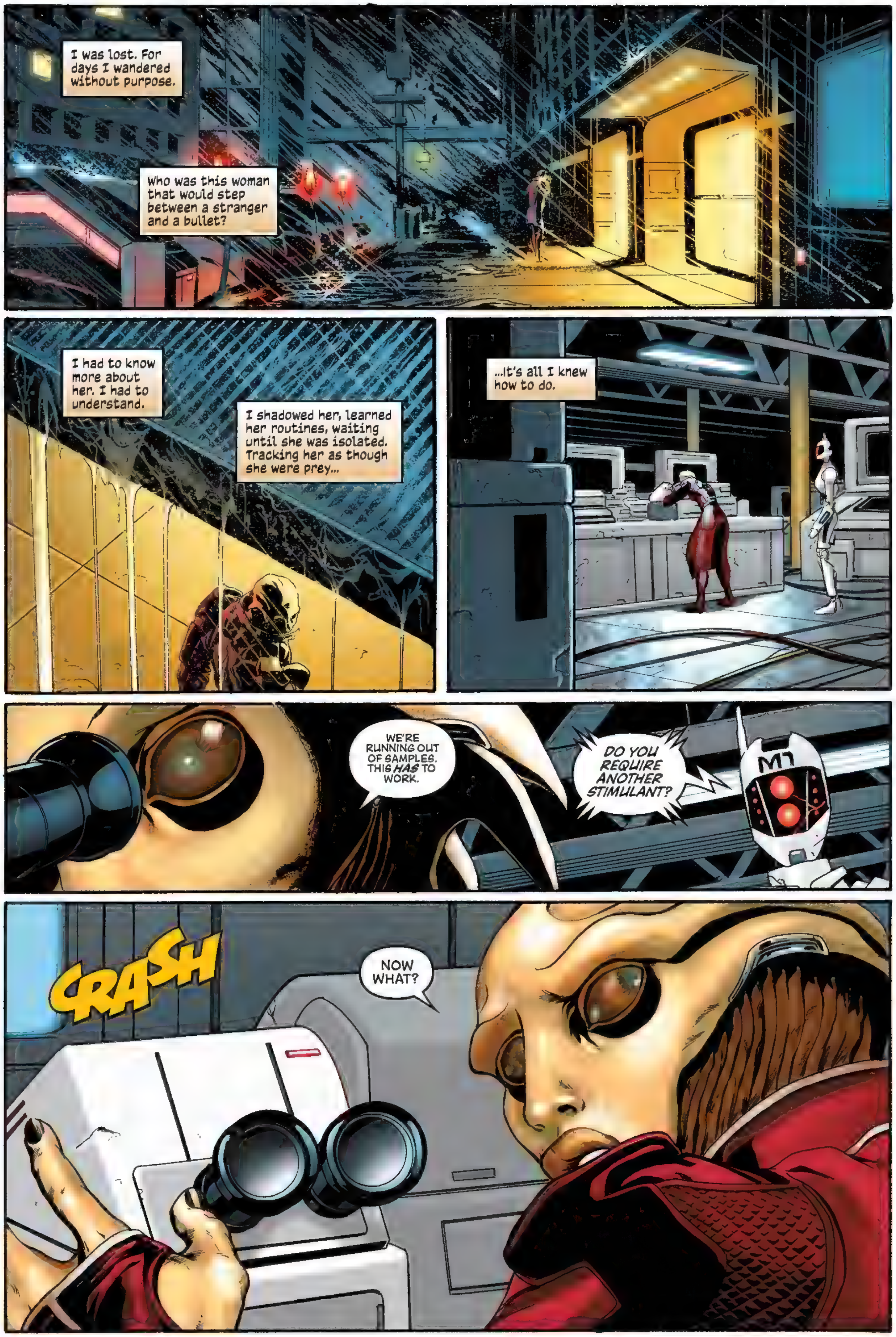

SIR, IT'S MIRANDA.
WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT RASA.
WE HAVE A PROBLEM.
WHAT KIND OF A PROBLEM?
"SHE CAN NO LONGER BE TRUSTED."
"COULD SHE *EVER* BE TRUSTED?
"YOU MEAN SHE CAN NO LONGER BE *CONTROLLED.*
EM
"HOW MUCH DOES SHE KNOW?"
"SHE KNOWS WE'RE WATCHING HER. RIGHT NOW SHE'S COMPILING THE *THANE KRIOS* DOSSIER...
"ABOUT THE LAZARUS PROJECT? ENOUGH TO BE DANGEROUS.
"...IT WON'T TAKE LONG FOR HER TO PUT TWO AND TWO TOGETHER."
"THEN IT'S TIME WE STOPPED PRETENDING. WE'VE INVESTED A *GREAT DEAL* IN RASA'S DEVELOPMENT, BUT IF THAT INVESTMENT HAS BECOME A LIABILITY...
"...IT'S TIME WE CUT OUR LOSSES AND LET IT GO."

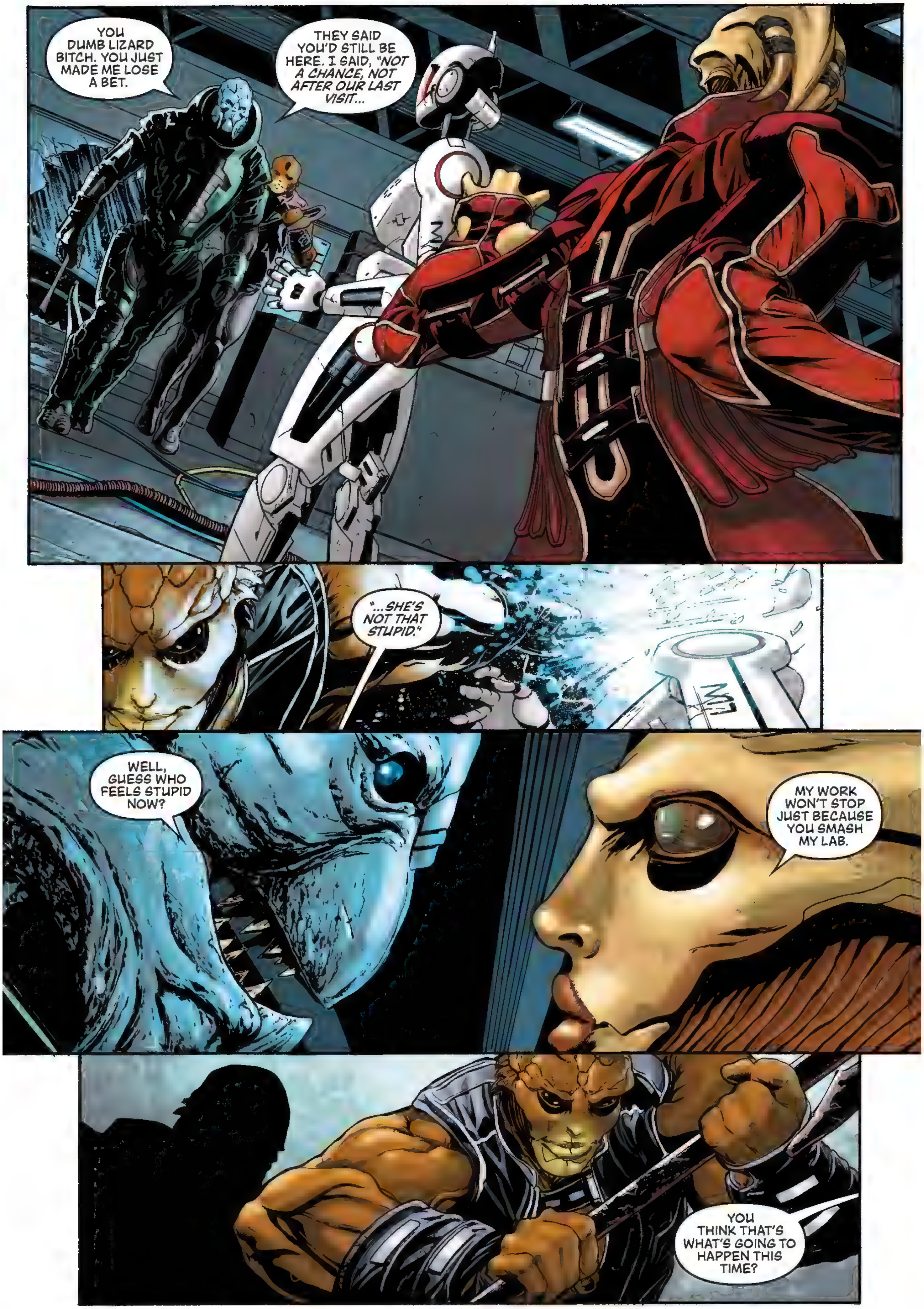

Cerberus Personnel Dossier, File 91794. Interview subject -- ***Thane Krios.*** Transcription as follows:
You want to know if I can be compromised.
If my loyalty can be tested -- if it can be ***undermined*** through any emotional ties I might have.
If that had ever been the case, those days are long past.
AMANKIRA GUIDE ME.
Conscience and guilt are never factors in the assignments I take.
In the moments before a kill, my hands become the instrument of my employer. Nothing more.
There are no judgments. No right or wrong.
Though that hasn't ***always*** been true...

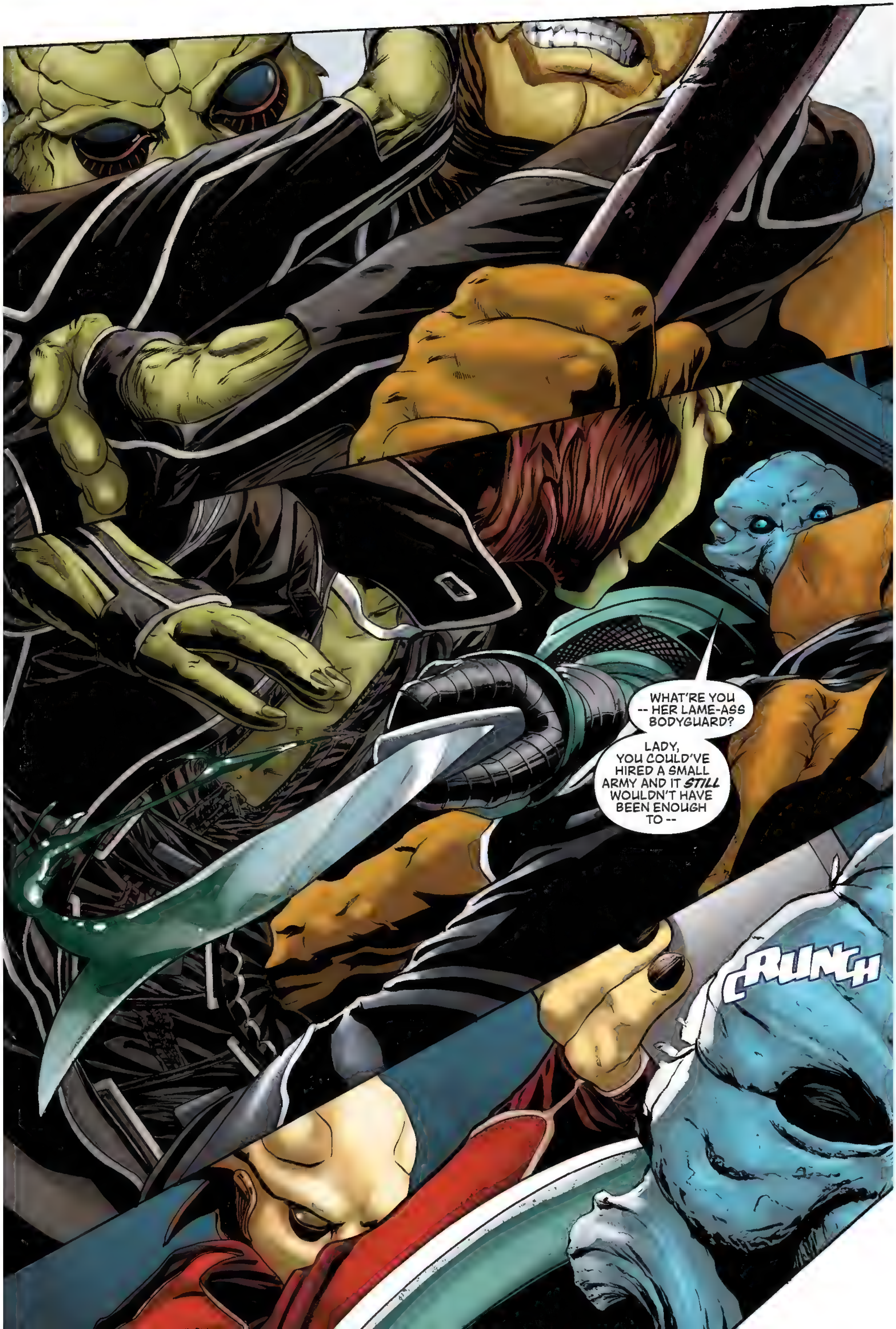

My training began at age six.
As per our species *Compact*, my parents gave me over to the hanar. It was a great honor.
Though at the time, concepts like honor and free will meant little to me.
I was reshaped into what they needed me to be.
I made my first kill at age twelve.
It was clumsy. Sloppy. Only through Arashu's grace was I the one left alive at the end of it.
Killing came easier after that.
I became... proficient.
Over time I gave myself over to this role completely.
It was as if my soul had gone to sleep while my body carried on.

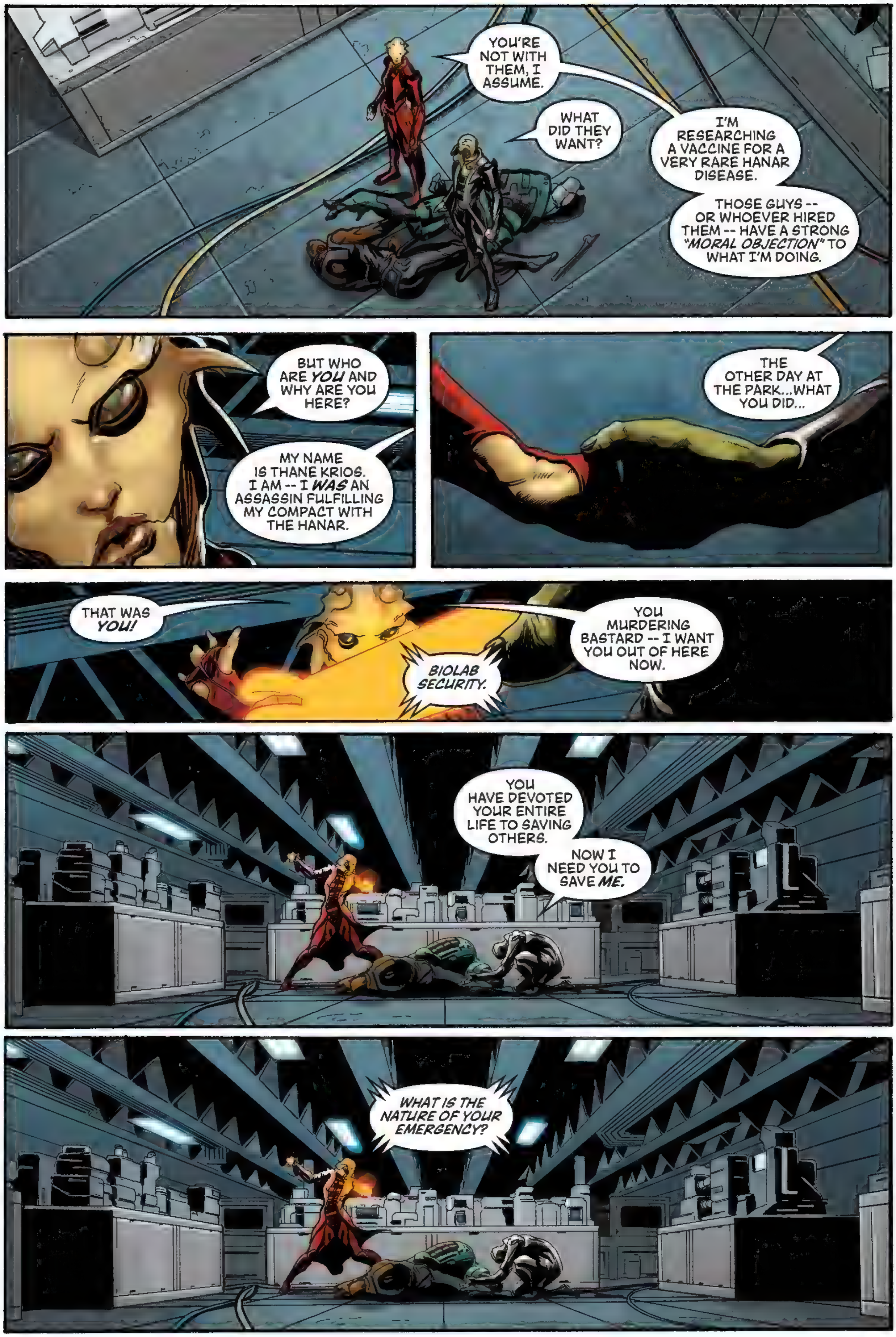

Until the day someone shook me from my sleep.
My target was a salarian. An old war criminal gone into hiding. His victims' families hired me to deliver the justice he'd escaped for so long.
I didn't care about his crimes.
I didn't care about anything...
...until *she* intervened.
Sunset-colored eyes defiant in the scope.
Her name was *Irikah.*
HOW DARE YOU.

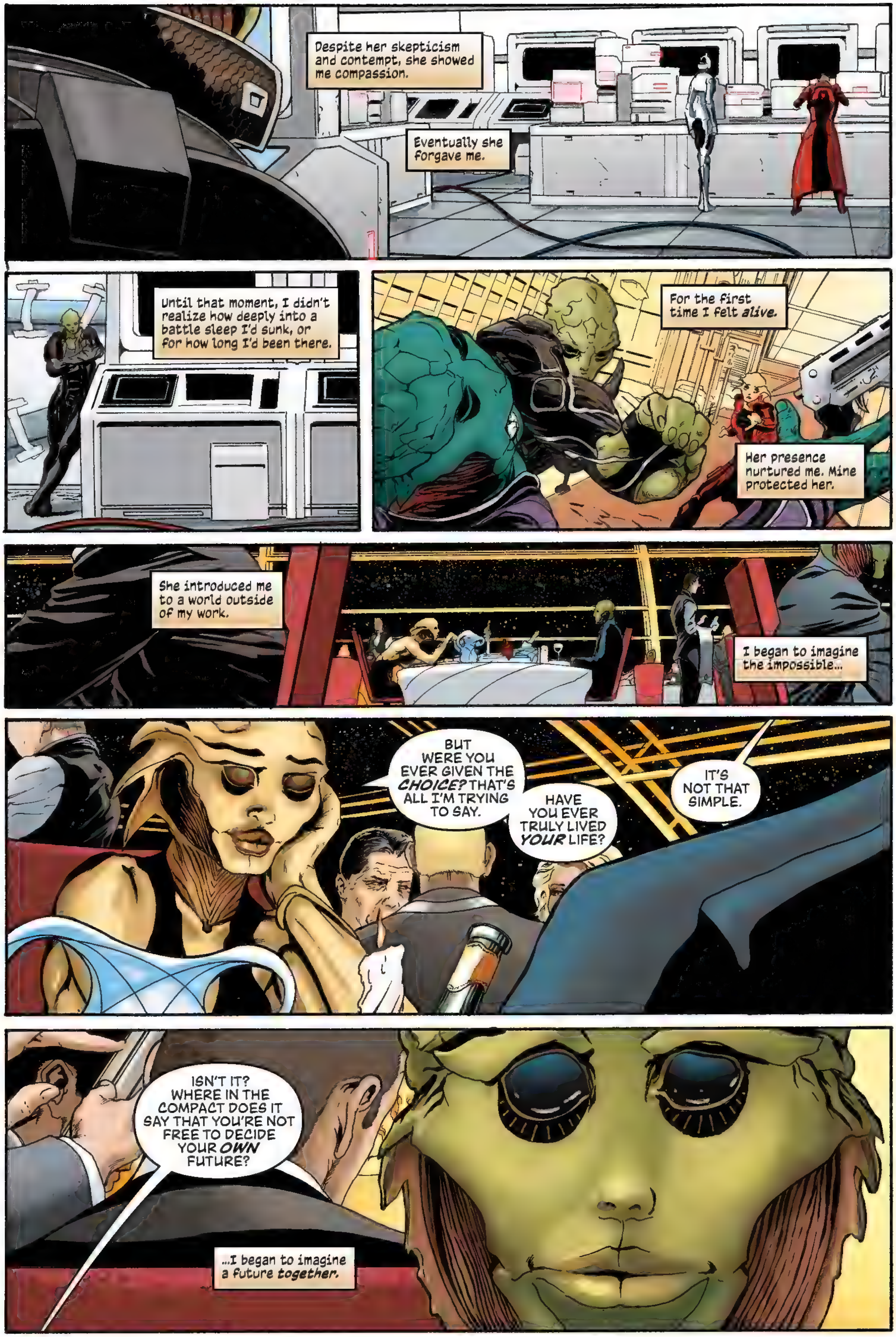

Her intervention defied logic.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? MY BIRDS --!
SOMEONE IS TRYING TO ASSASSINATE YOU.
YOU SHOULD LEAVE. GO QUICKLY.
THANK YOU. THANK YOU.
Unfamiliar emotions surged through me.
Guilt. Shame. Regret.

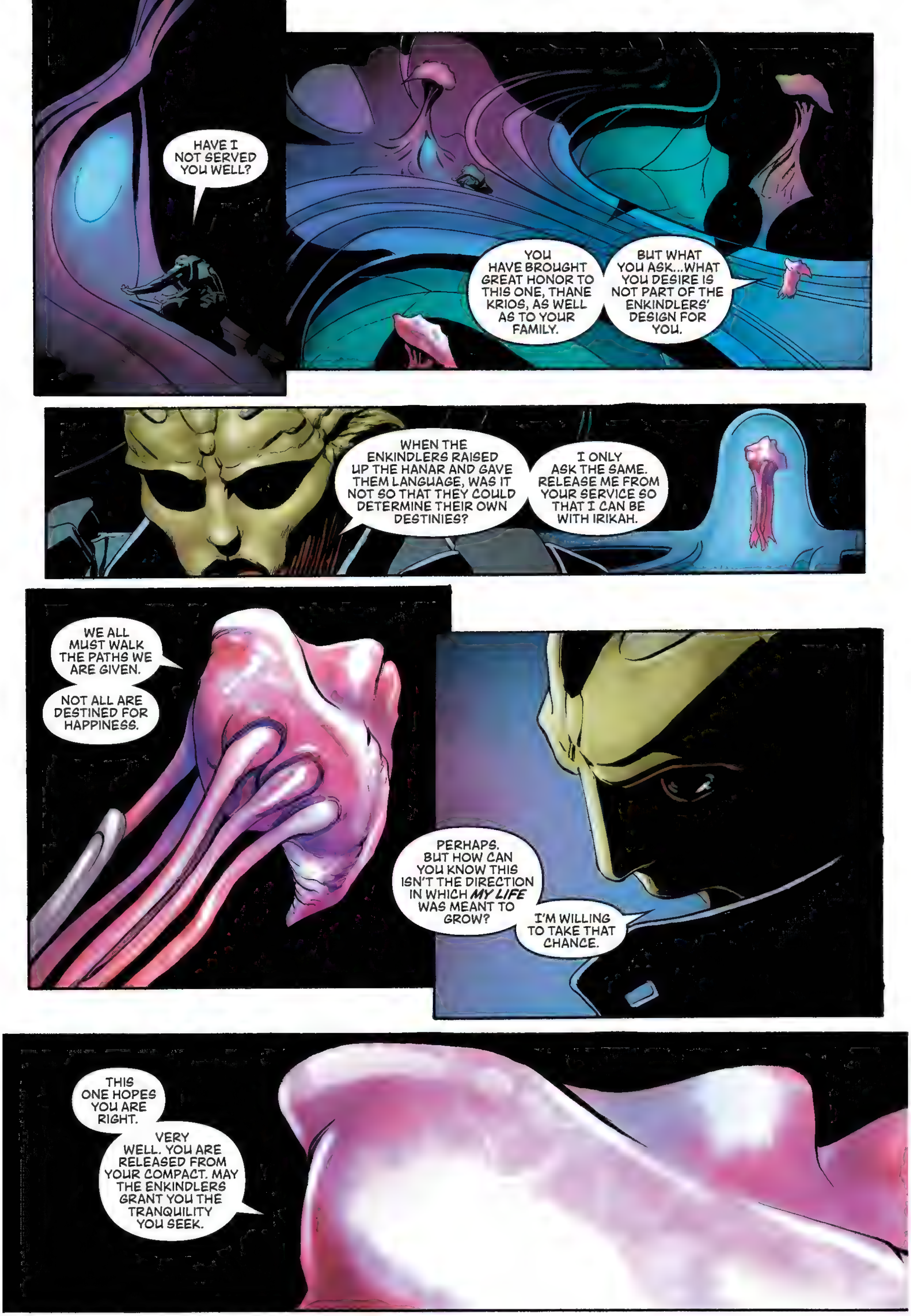

I was lost. For days I wandered without purpose.
Who was this woman that would step between a stranger and a bullet?
I had to know more about her. I had to understand.
I shadowed her, learned her routines, waiting until she was isolated. Tracking her as though she were prey...
...it's all I knew how to do.
WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF SAMPLES. THIS *HAS* TO WORK.
DO YOU REQUIRE ANOTHER STIMULANT?
M1
CRASH
NOW WHAT?

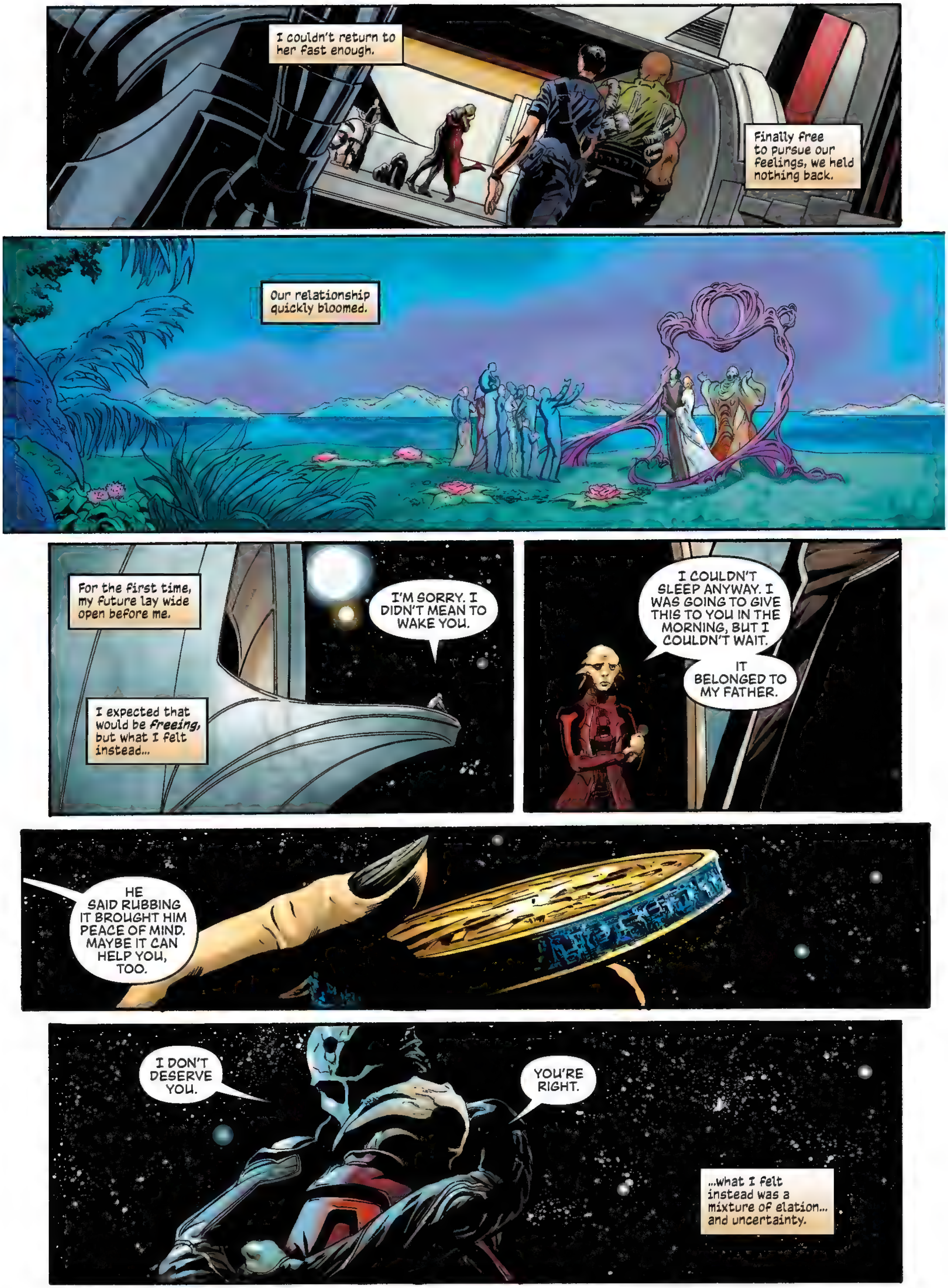

YOU DUMB LIZARD BITCH. YOU JUST MADE ME LOSE A BET.
THEY SAID YOU'D STILL BE HERE. I SAID, *"NOT A CHANCE, NOT AFTER OUR LAST VISIT...*
"...SHE'S NOT THAT STUPID."
WELL, GUESS WHO FEELS STUPID NOW?
MY WORK WON'T STOP JUST BECAUSE YOU SMASH MY LAB.
YOU THINK THAT'S WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN THIS TIME?

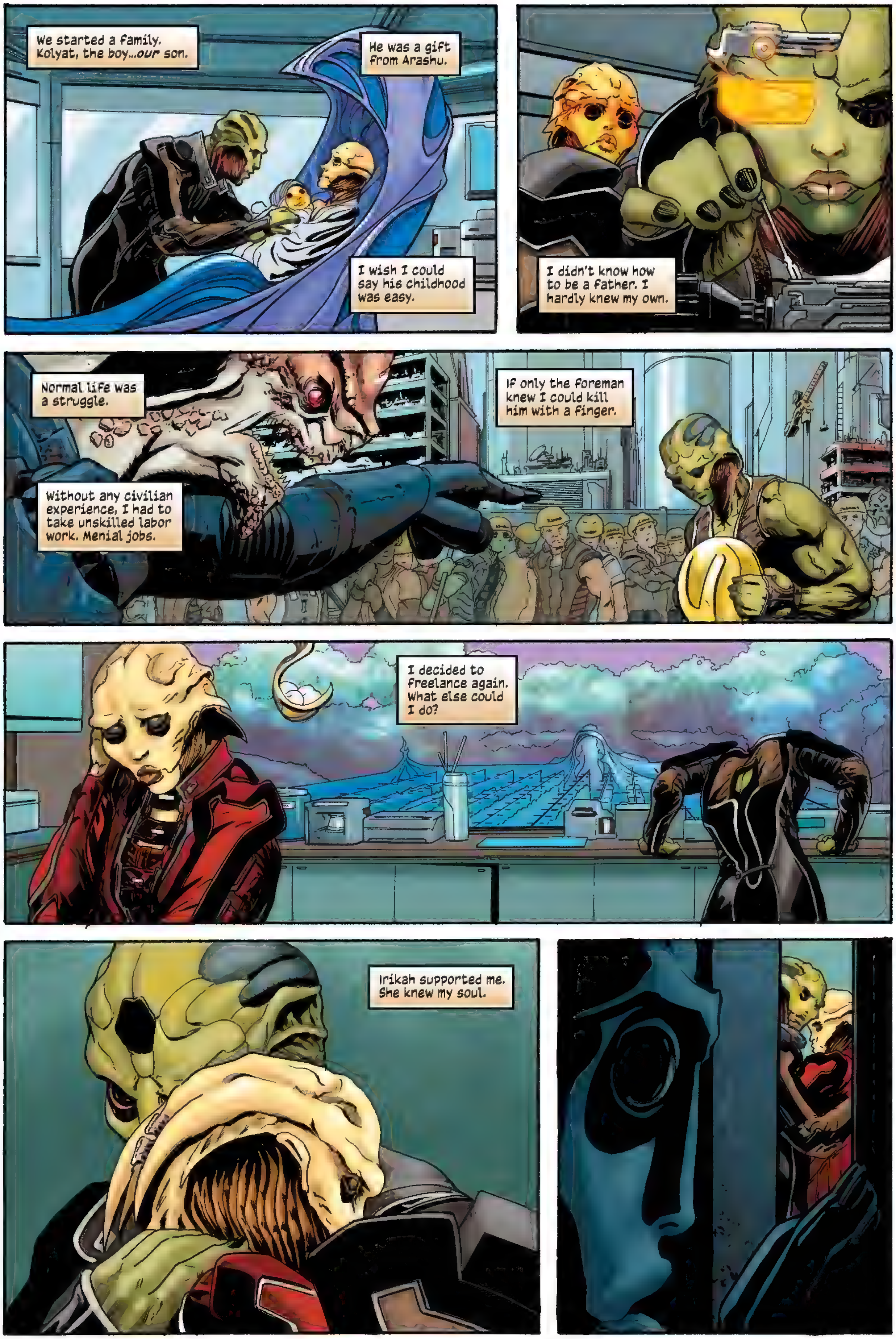

WHAT'RE YOU -- HER LAME-ASS BODYGUARD?
LADY, YOU COULD'VE HIRED A SMALL ARMY AND IT *STILL* WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ENOUGH TO --
CRUNCH

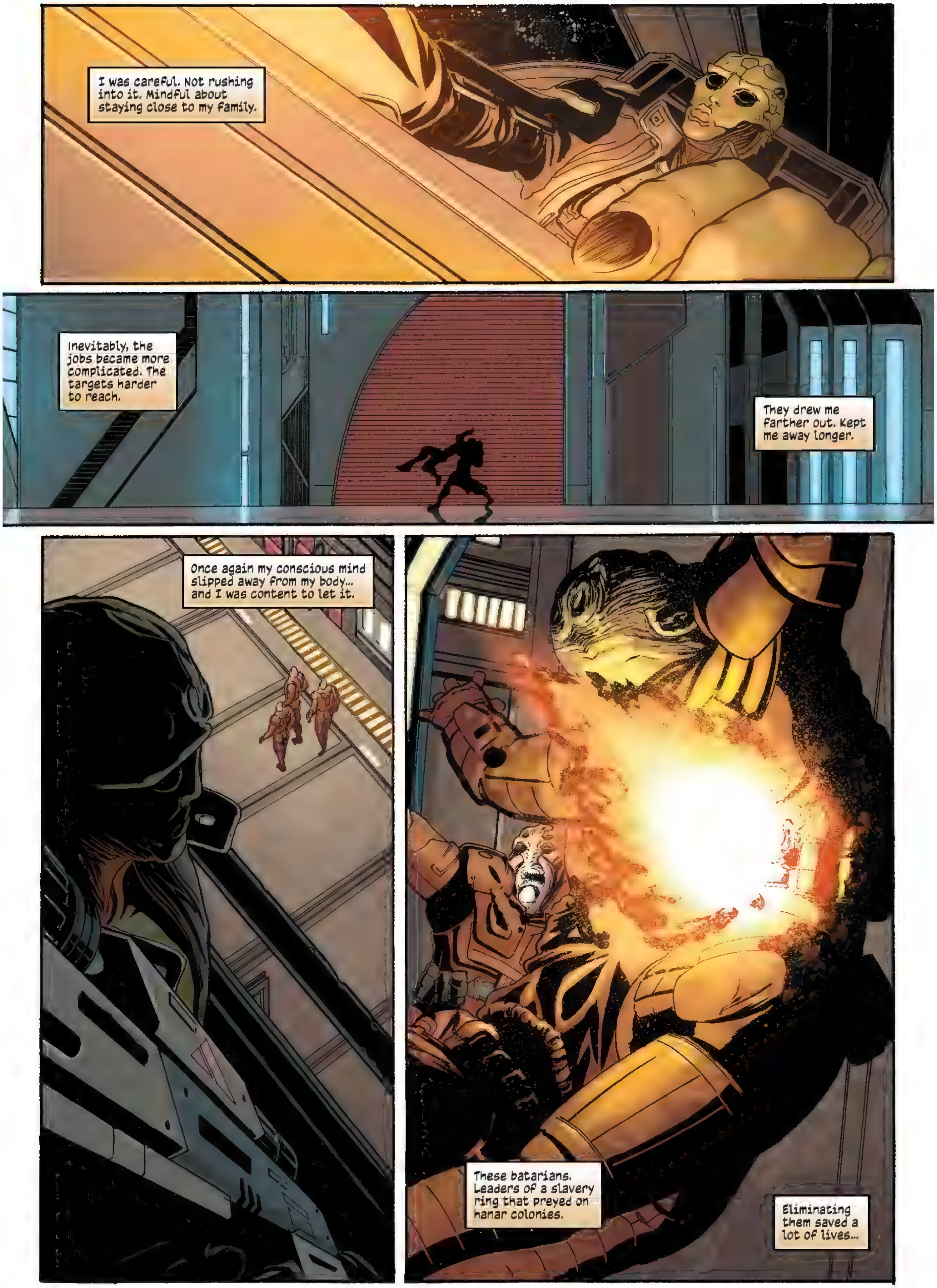

YOU'RE NOT WITH THEM, I ASSUME.
WHAT DID THEY WANT?
I'M RESEARCHING A VACCINE FOR A VERY RARE HANAR DISEASE.
THOSE GUYS -- OR WHOEVER HIRED THEM -- HAVE A STRONG "MORAL OBJECTION" TO WHAT I'M DOING.
BUT WHO ARE YOU AND WHY ARE YOU HERE?
MY NAME IS THANE KRIOS. I AM -- I WAS AN ASSASSIN FULFILLING MY COMPACT WITH THE HANAR.
THE OTHER DAY AT THE PARK...WHAT YOU DID...
THAT WAS YOU!
YOU MURDERING BASTARD -- I WANT YOU OUT OF HERE NOW.
BIOLAB SECURITY.
YOU HAVE DEVOTED YOUR ENTIRE LIFE TO SAVING OTHERS.
NOW I NEED YOU TO SAVE ME.
WHAT IS THE NATURE OF YOUR EMERGENCY?

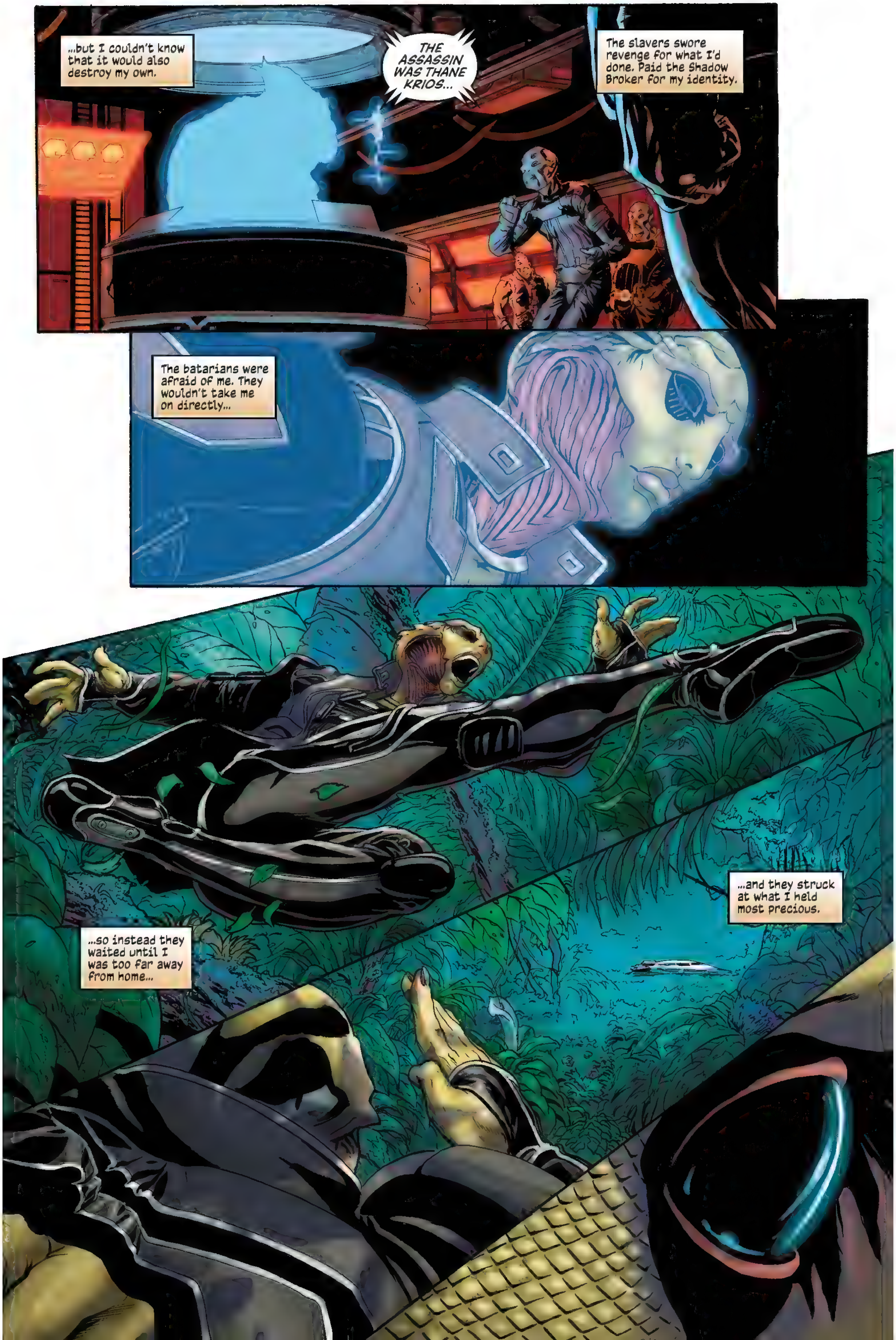

Despite her skepticism and contempt, she showed me compassion.
Eventually she forgave me.
Until that moment, I didn't realize how deeply into a battle sleep I'd sunk, or for how long I'd been there.
For the first time I felt *alive.*
Her presence nurtured me. Mine protected her.
She introduced me to a world outside of my work.
I began to imagine the impossible...
BUT WERE YOU EVER GIVEN THE *CHOICE?* THAT'S ALL I'M TRYING TO SAY.
HAVE YOU EVER TRULY LIVED *YOUR* LIFE?
IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE.
ISN'T IT? WHERE IN THE COMPACT DOES IT SAY THAT YOU'RE NOT FREE TO DECIDE YOUR *OWN* FUTURE?
...I began to imagine a future *together.*

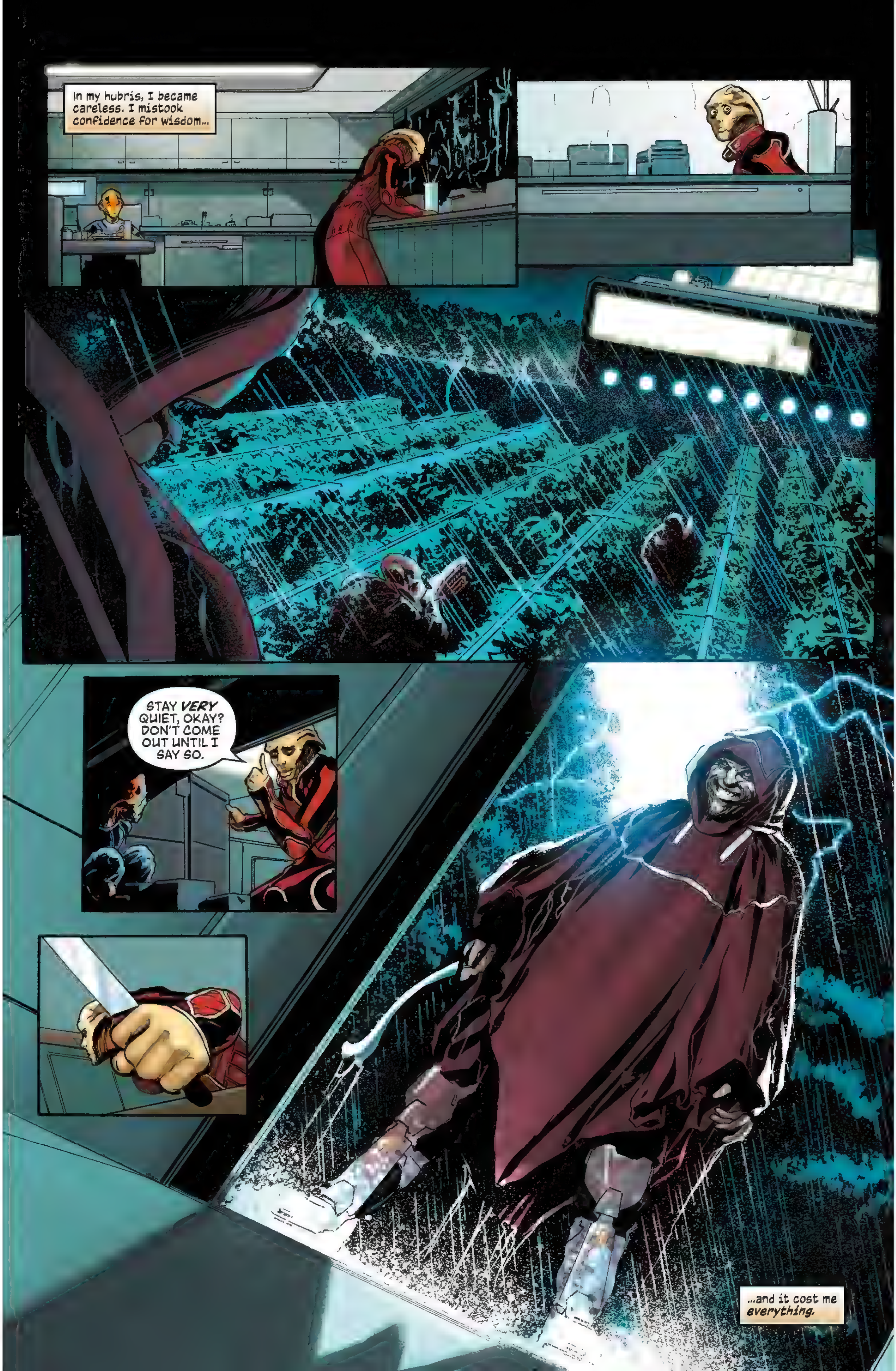

HAVE I NOT SERVED YOU WELL?
YOU HAVE BROUGHT GREAT HONOR TO THIS ONE, THANE KRIOS, AS WELL AS TO YOUR FAMILY.
BUT WHAT YOU ASK...WHAT YOU DESIRE IS NOT PART OF THE ENKINDLERS' DESIGN FOR YOU.
WHEN THE ENKINDLERS RAISED UP THE HANAR AND GAVE THEM LANGUAGE, WAS IT NOT SO THAT THEY COULD DETERMINE THEIR OWN DESTINIES?
I ONLY ASK THE SAME. RELEASE ME FROM YOUR SERVICE SO THAT I CAN BE WITH IRIKAH.
WE ALL MUST WALK THE PATHS WE ARE GIVEN.
NOT ALL ARE DESTINED FOR HAPPINESS.
PERHAPS. BUT HOW CAN YOU KNOW THIS ISN'T THE DIRECTION IN WHICH *MY LIFE* WAS MEANT TO GROW?
I'M WILLING TO TAKE THAT CHANCE.
THIS ONE HOPES YOU ARE RIGHT.
VERY WELL. YOU ARE RELEASED FROM YOUR COMPACT. MAY THE ENKINDLERS GRANT YOU THE TRANQUILITY YOU SEEK.

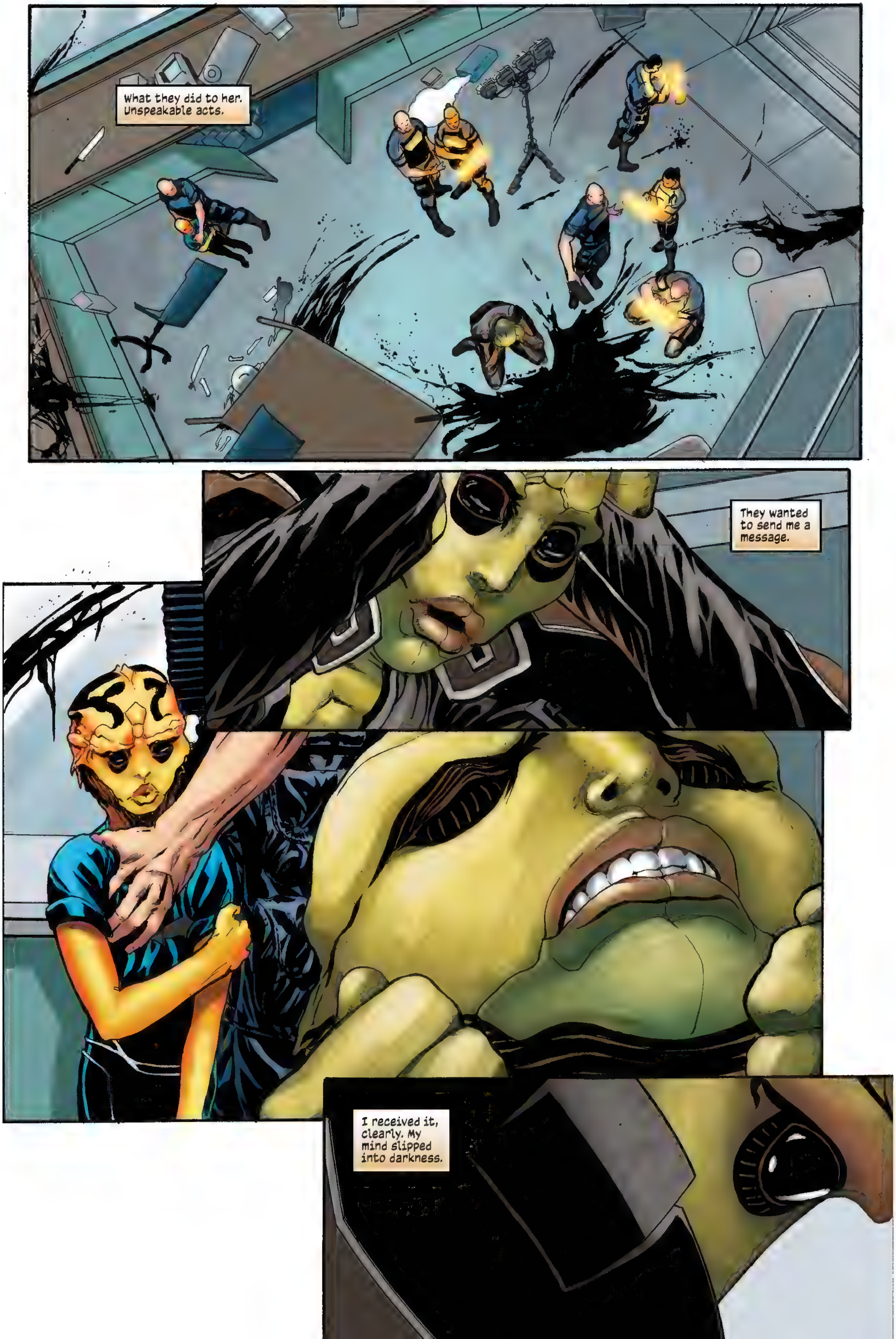

I couldn't return to her fast enough.
Finally free to pursue our feelings, we held nothing back.
Our relationship quickly bloomed.
For the first time, my future lay wide open before me.
I expected that would be *freeing,* but what I felt instead...
I'M SORRY. I DIDN'T MEAN TO WAKE YOU.
I COULDN'T SLEEP ANYWAY. I WAS GOING TO GIVE THIS TO YOU IN THE MORNING, BUT I COULDN'T WAIT.
IT BELONGED TO MY FATHER.
HE SAID RUBBING IT BROUGHT HIM PEACE OF MIND. MAYBE IT CAN HELP YOU, TOO.
I DON'T DESERVE YOU.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
...what I felt instead was a mixture of elation... and uncertainty.

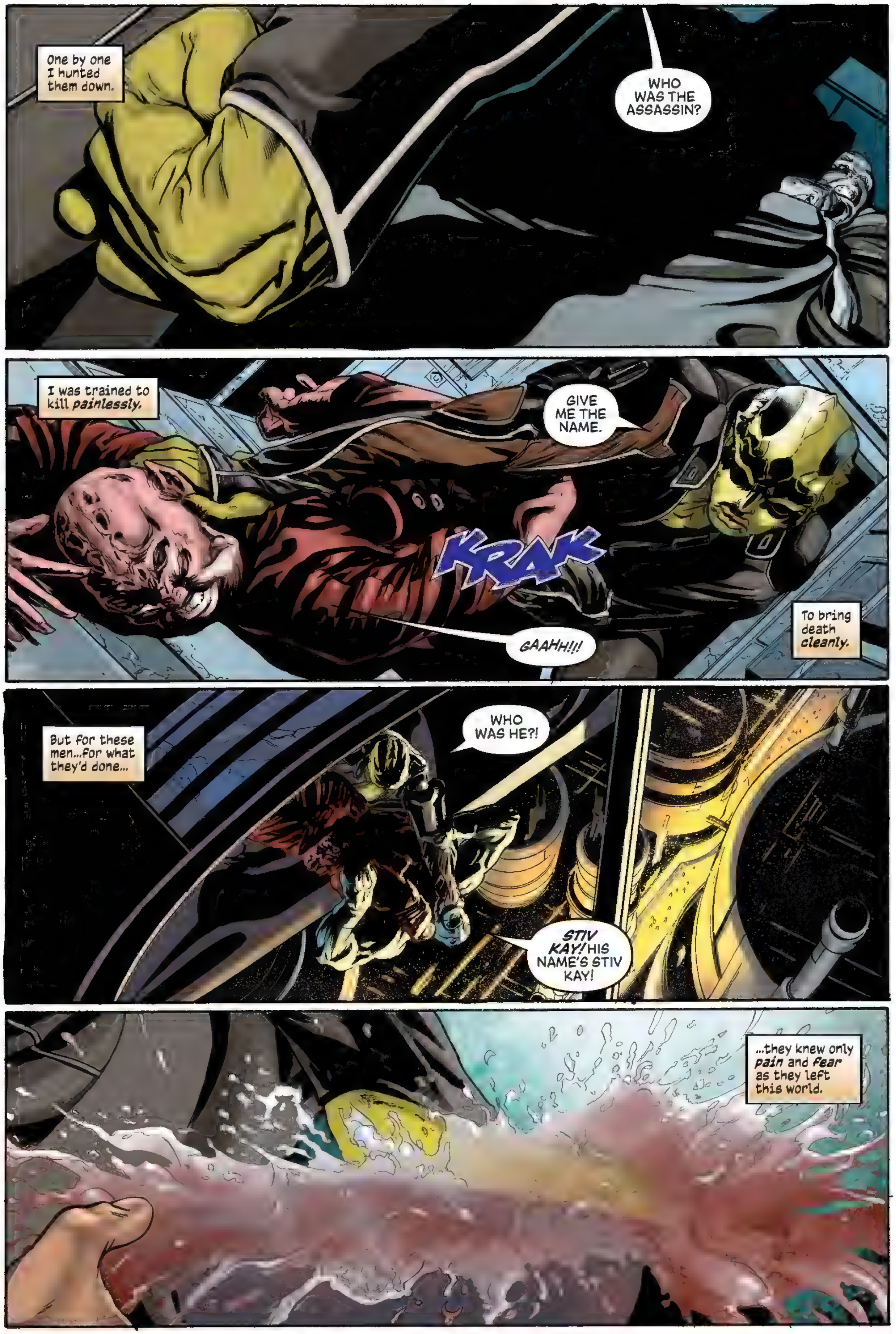

We started a family. Kolyat, the boy...*our* son.
He was a gift from Arashu.
I wish I could say his childhood was easy.
I didn't know how to be a father. I hardly knew my own.
Normal life was a struggle.
Without any civilian experience, I had to take unskilled labor work. Menial jobs.
If only the foreman knew I could kill him with a finger.
I decided to freelance again. What else could I do?
Irikah supported me. She knew my soul.

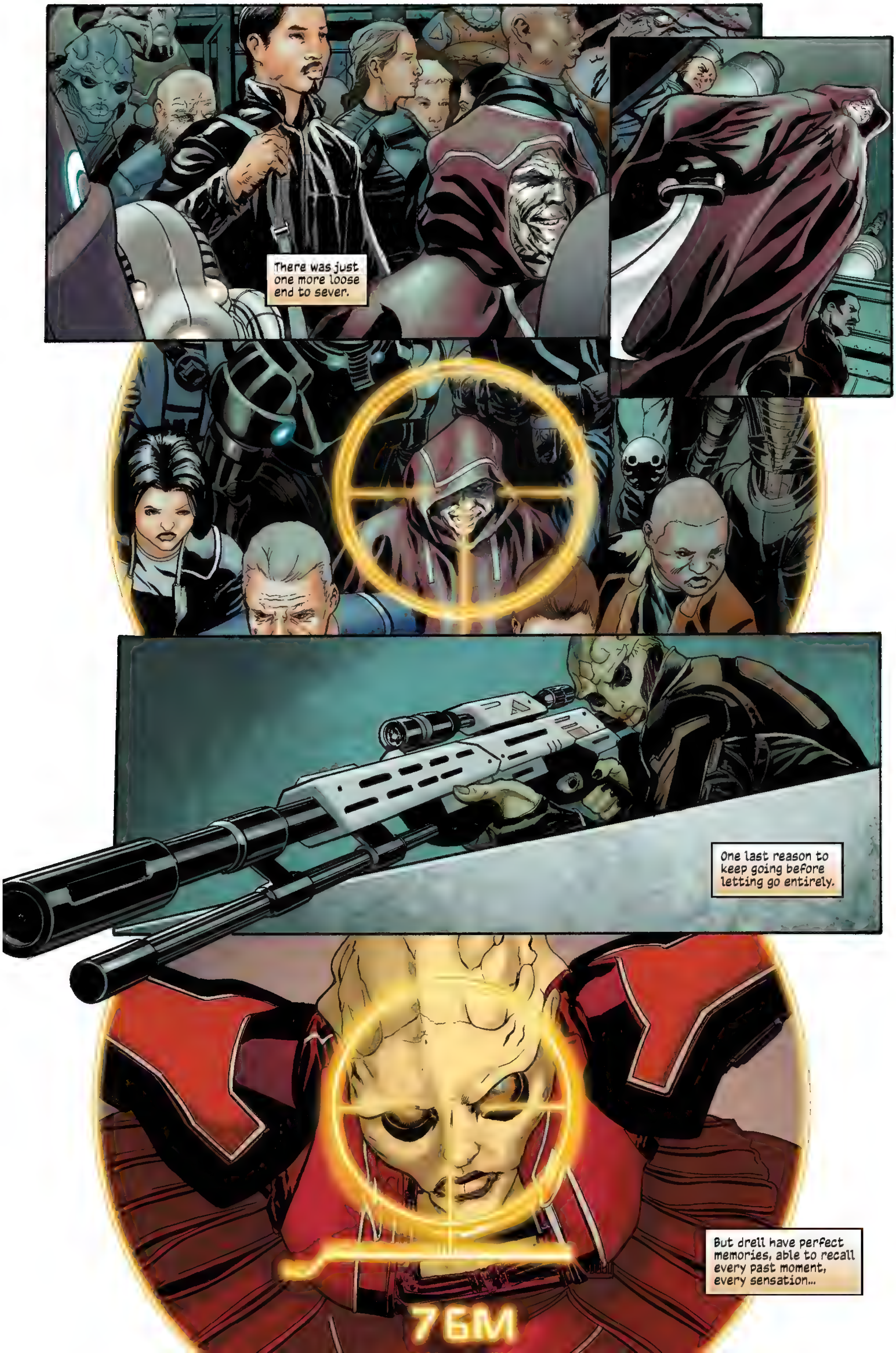

I was careful. Not rushing into it. Mindful about staying close to my family.
Inevitably, the jobs became more complicated. The targets harder to reach.
They drew me farther out. Kept me away longer.
Once again my conscious mind slipped away from my body... and I was content to let it.
These batarians. Leaders of a slavery ring that preyed on hanar colonies.
Eliminating them saved a lot of lives...

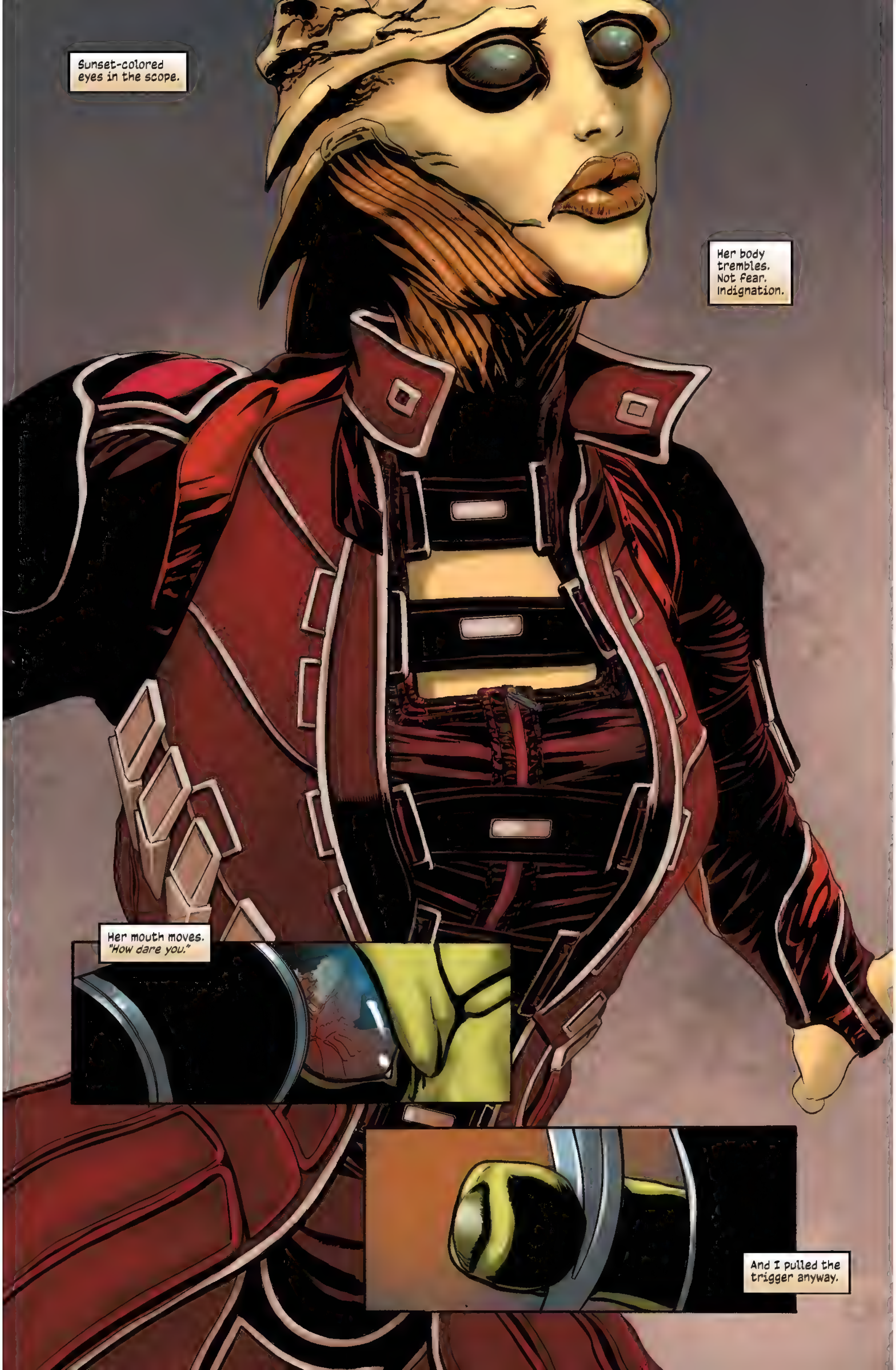

...but I couldn't know that it would also destroy my own.
THE ASSASSIN WAS THANE KRIOS...
The slavers swore revenge for what I'd done. Paid the Shadow Broker for my identity.
The batarians were afraid of me. They wouldn't take me on directly...
...so instead they waited until I was too far away from home...
...and they struck at what I held most precious.

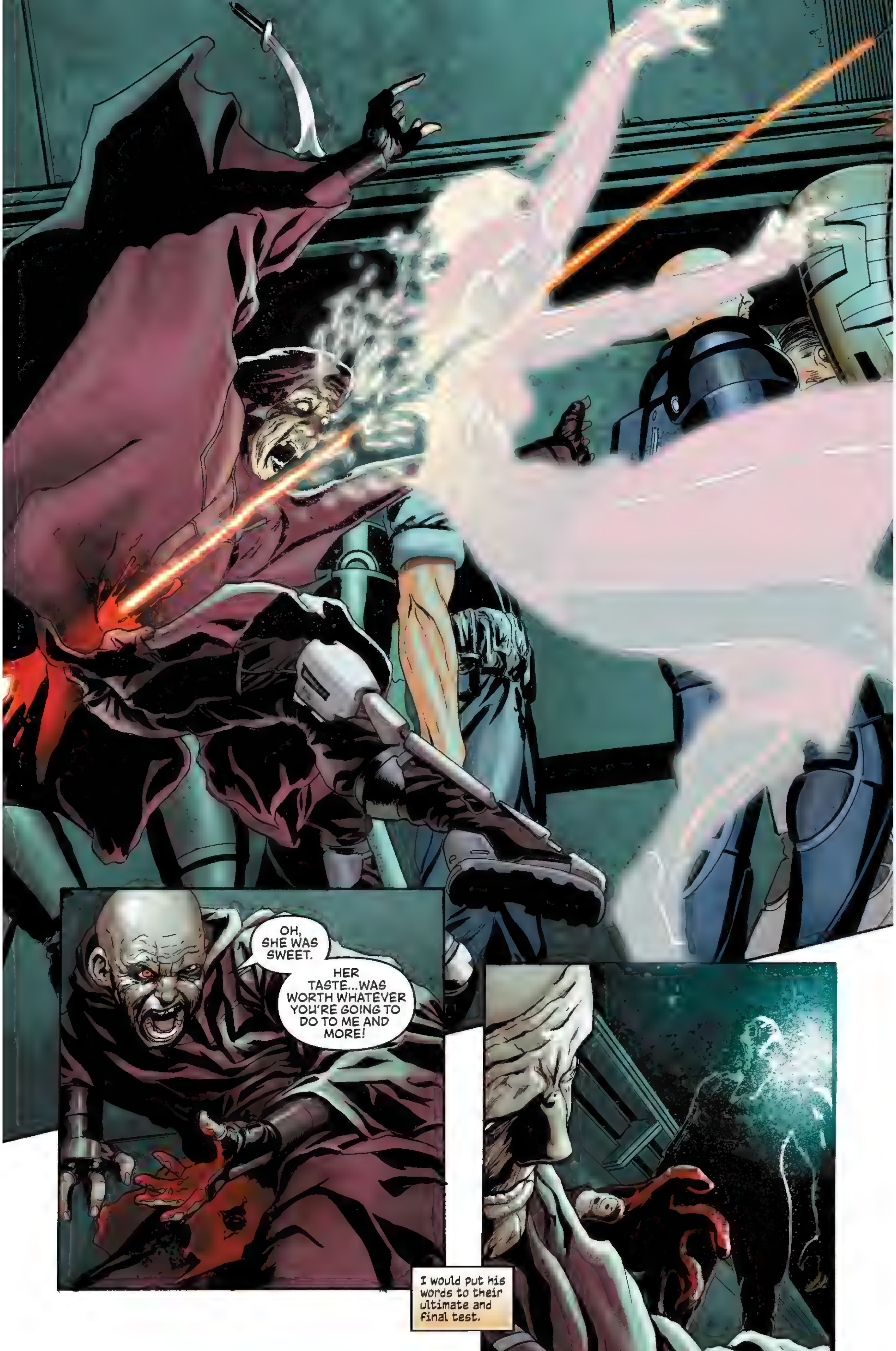

In my hubris, I became careless. I mistook confidence for wisdom...
STAY *VERY* QUIET, OKAY? DON'T COME OUT UNTIL I SAY SO.
...and it cost me *everything.*

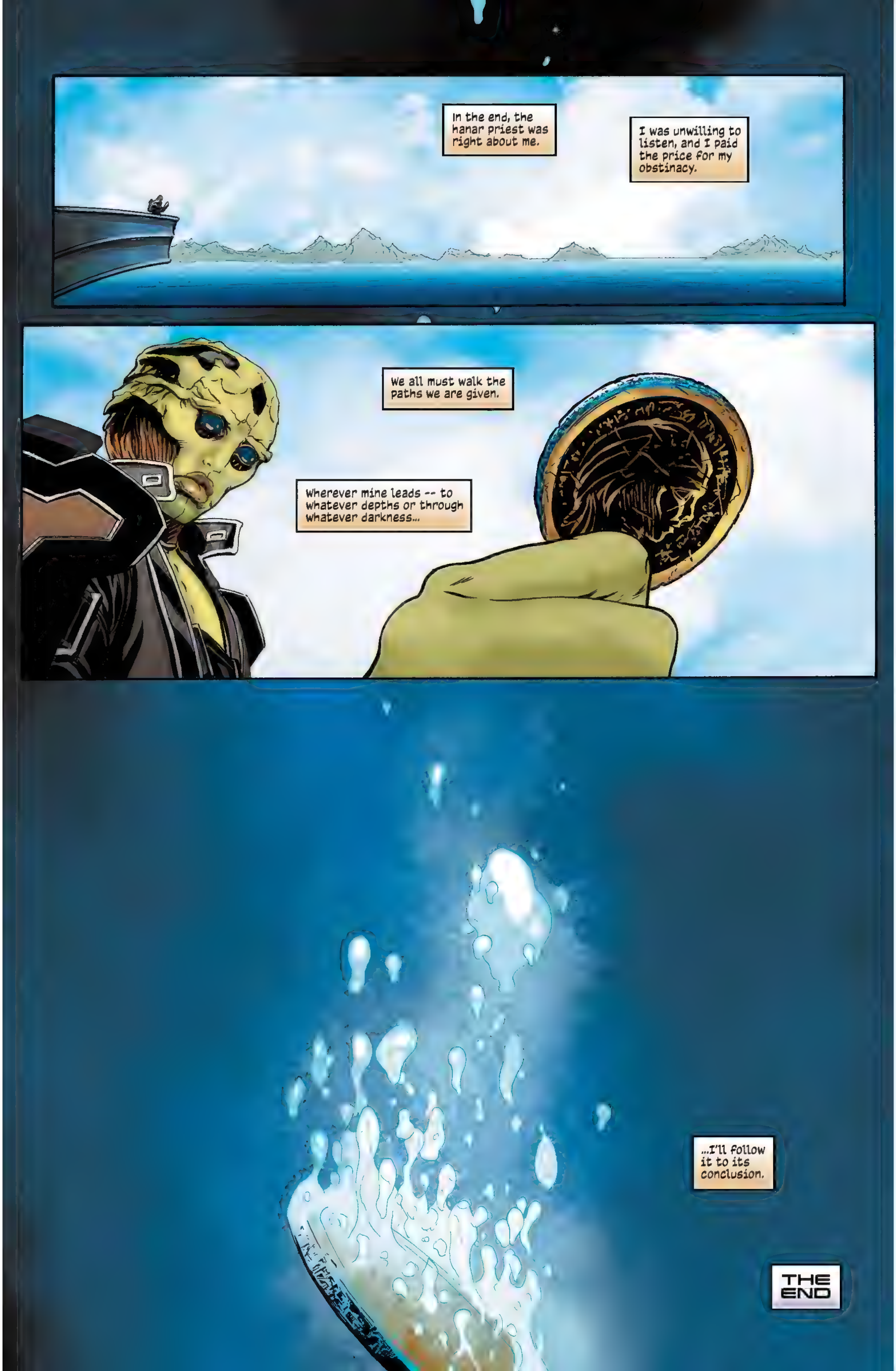

What they did to her. Unspeakable acts.
They wanted to send me a message.
I received it, clearly. My mind slipped into darkness.

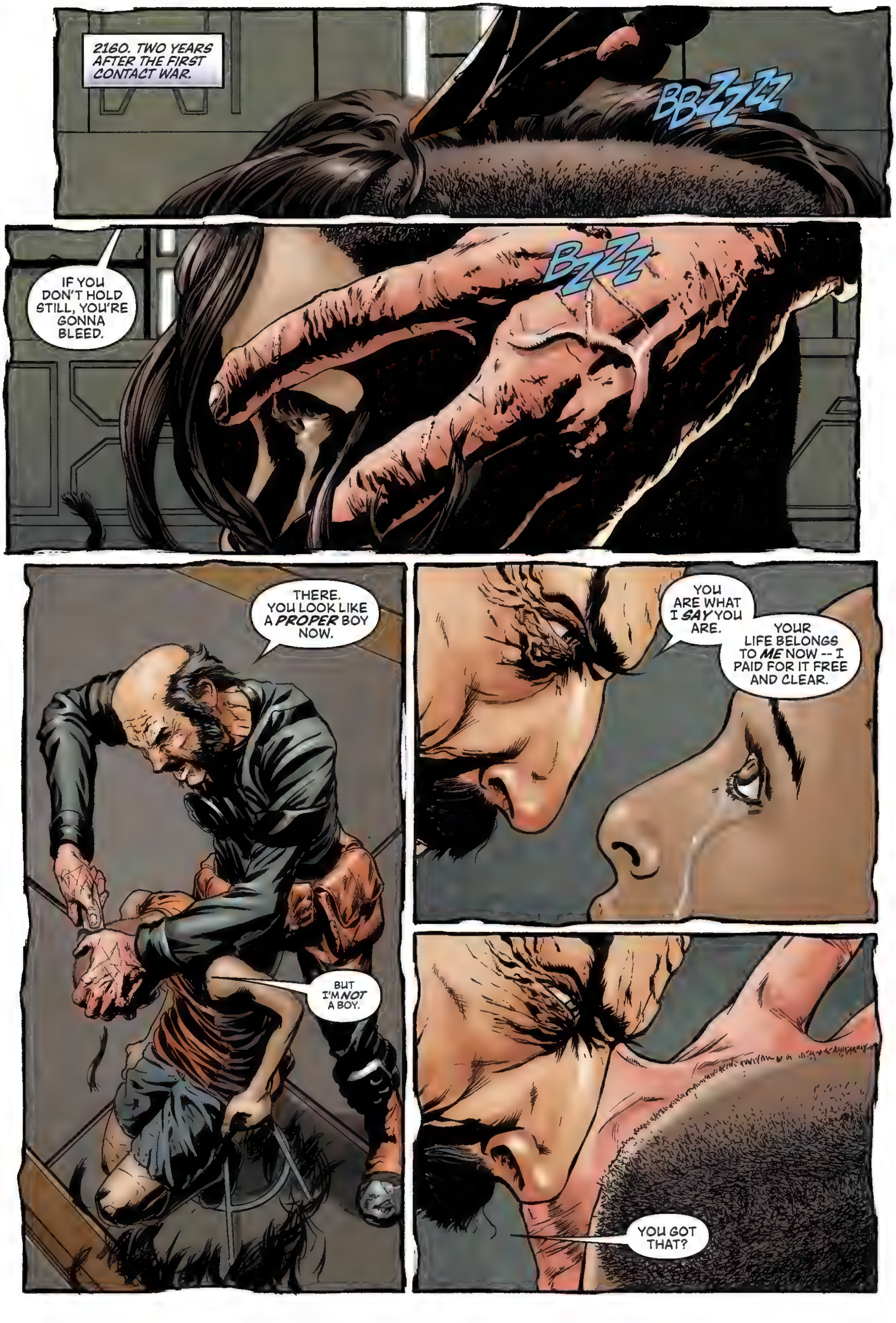

One by one I hunted them down.
WHO WAS THE ASSASSIN?
I was trained to kill *painlessly.*
GIVE ME THE NAME.
KRAK
GAAHH!!!
To bring death *cleanly.*
But for these men...for what they'd done...
WHO WAS HE?!
STIV KAY! HIS NAME'S STIV KAY!
...they knew only *pain* and *fear* as they left this world.

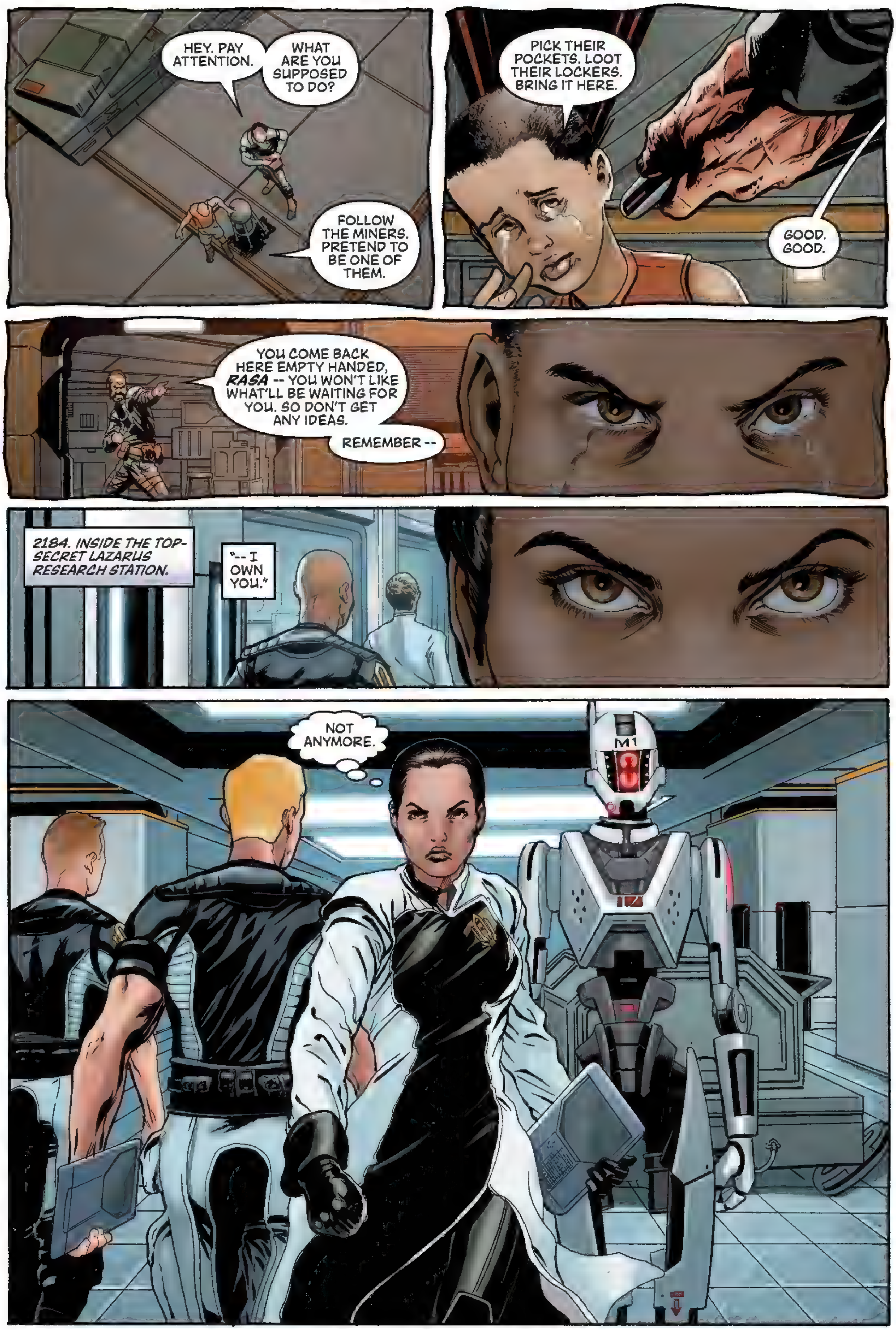

There was just one more loose end to sever.
One last reason to keep going before letting go entirely.
But drell have perfect memories, able to recall every past moment, every sensation...
76M

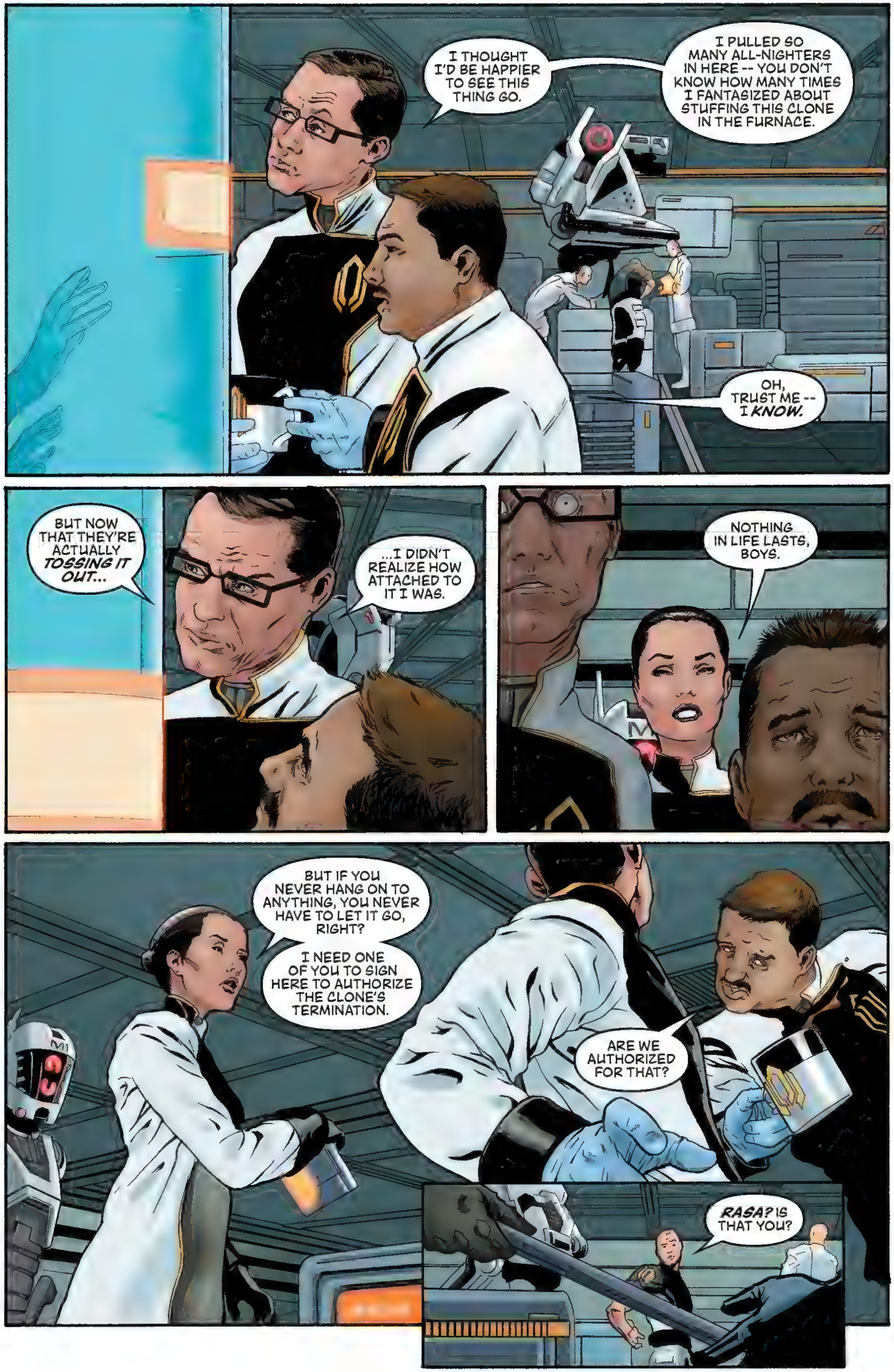

Sunset-colored eyes in the scope.
Her body trembles. Not fear. Indignation.
Her mouth moves. *"How dare you."*
And I pulled the trigger anyway.

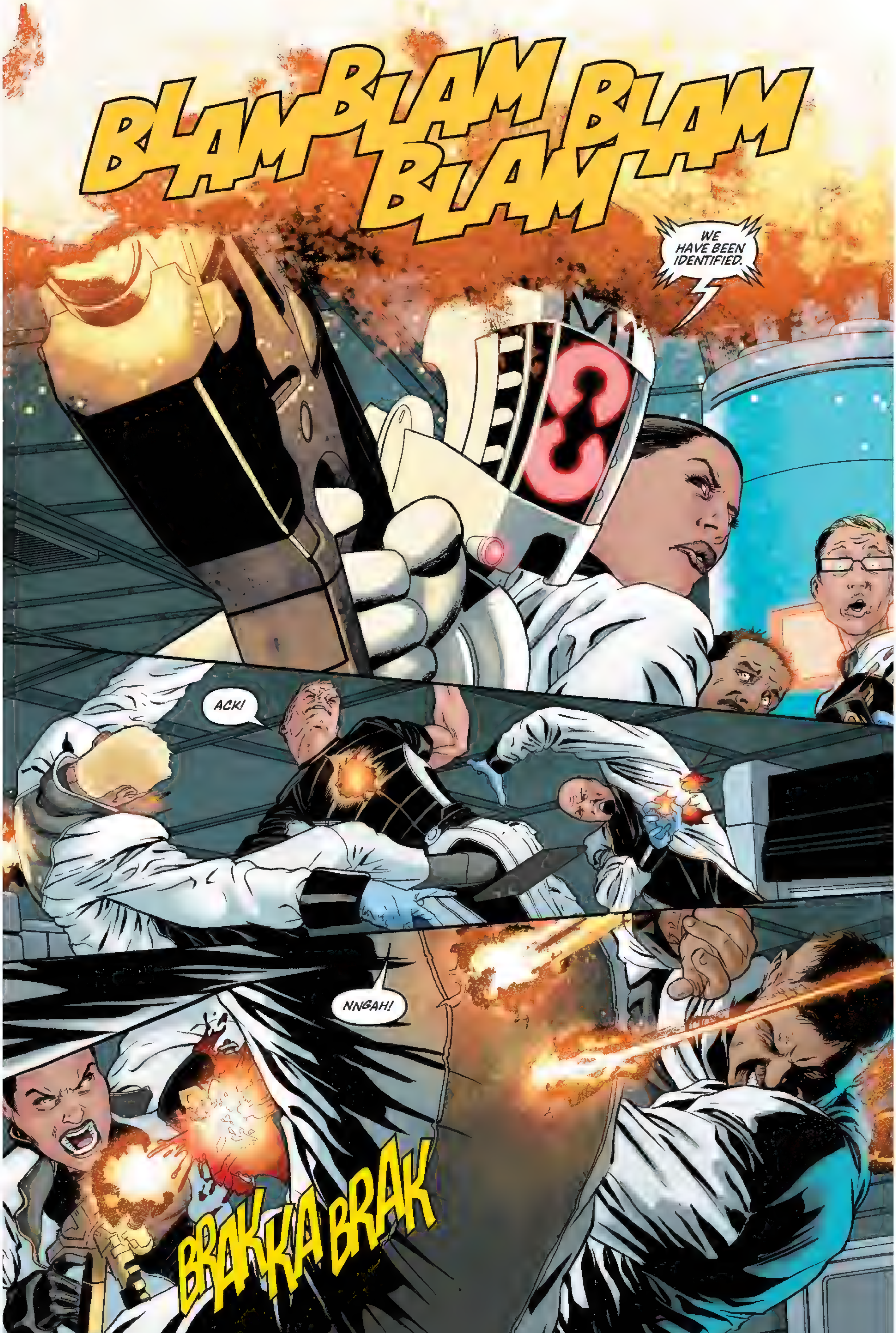

OH, SHE WAS SWEET.
HER TASTE...WAS WORTH WHATEVER YOU'RE GOING TO DO TO ME AND MORE!
I would put his words to their ultimate and final test.

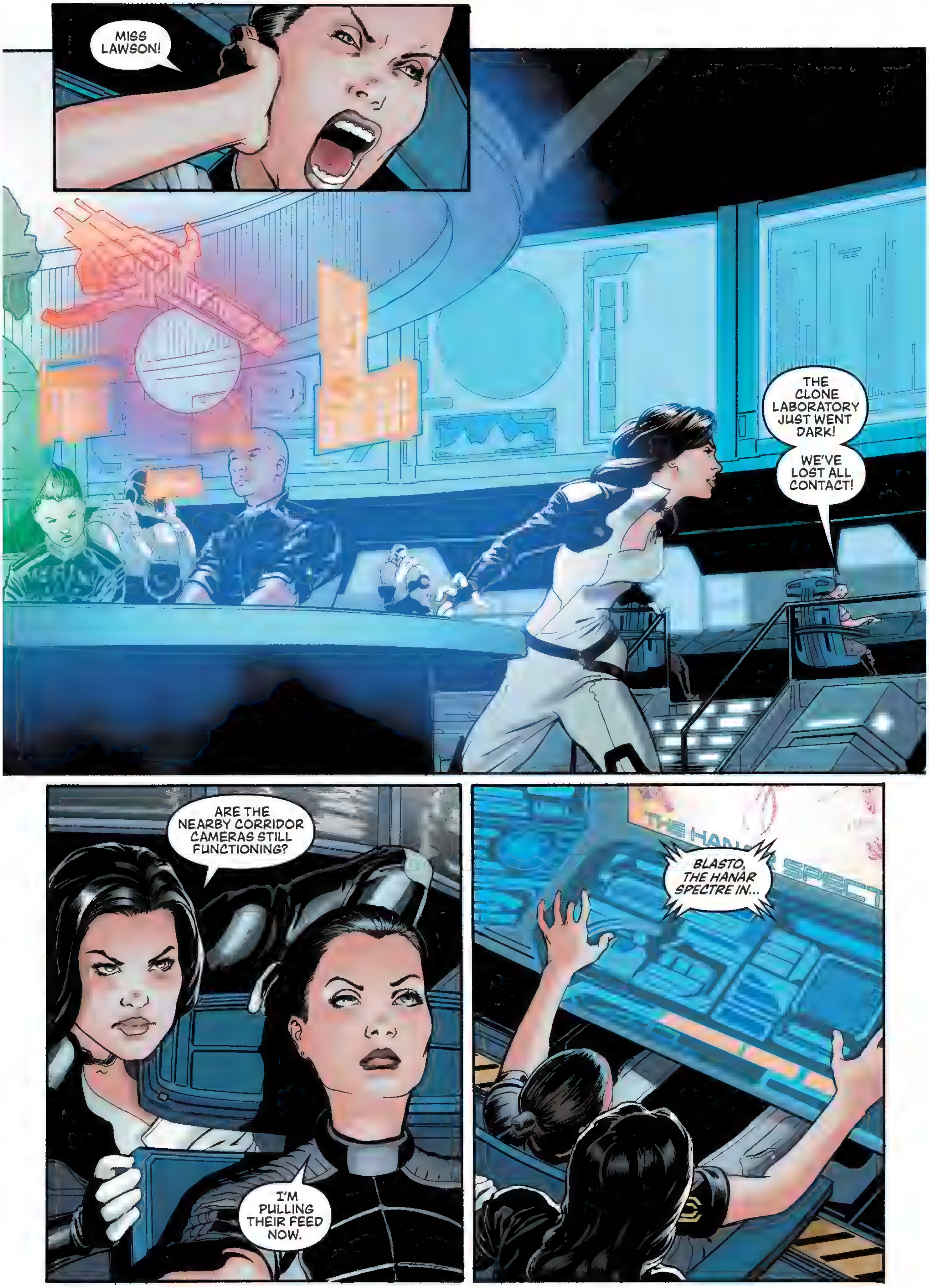

In the end, the hanar priest was right about me.
I was unwilling to listen, and I paid the price for my obstinacy.
We all must walk the paths we are given.
Wherever mine leads -- to whatever depths or through whatever darkness...
...I'll follow it to its conclusion.
THE END

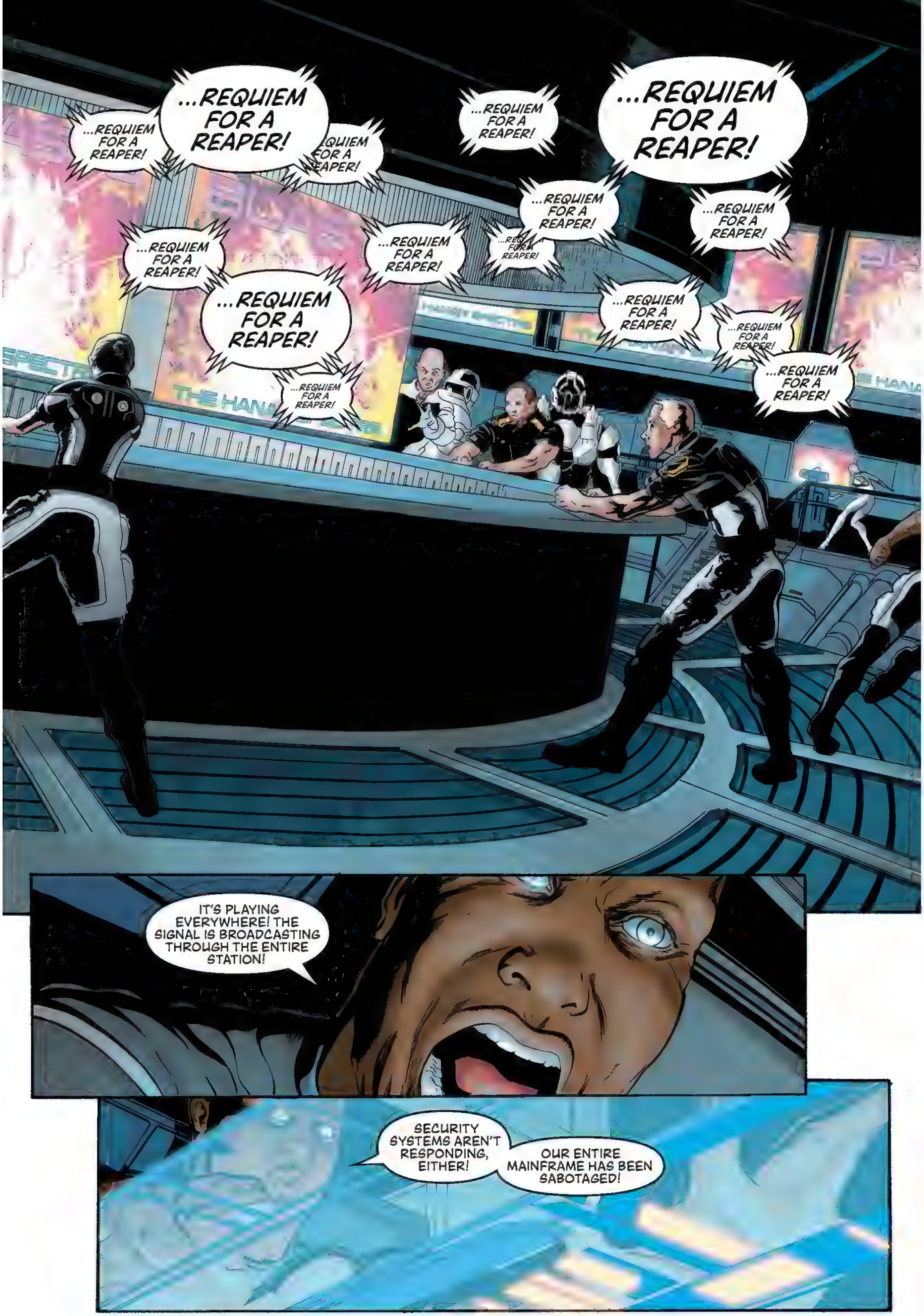

2160. TWO YEARS AFTER THE FIRST CONTACT WAR.
BB-ZZZZ
IF YOU DON'T HOLD STILL, YOU'RE GONNA BLEED.
BZZZ
THERE. YOU LOOK LIKE A *PROPER* BOY NOW.
BUT I'M *NOT* A BOY.
YOU ARE WHAT I *SAY* YOU ARE.
YOUR LIFE BELONGS TO *ME* NOW -- I PAID FOR IT FREE AND CLEAR.
YOU GOT THAT?

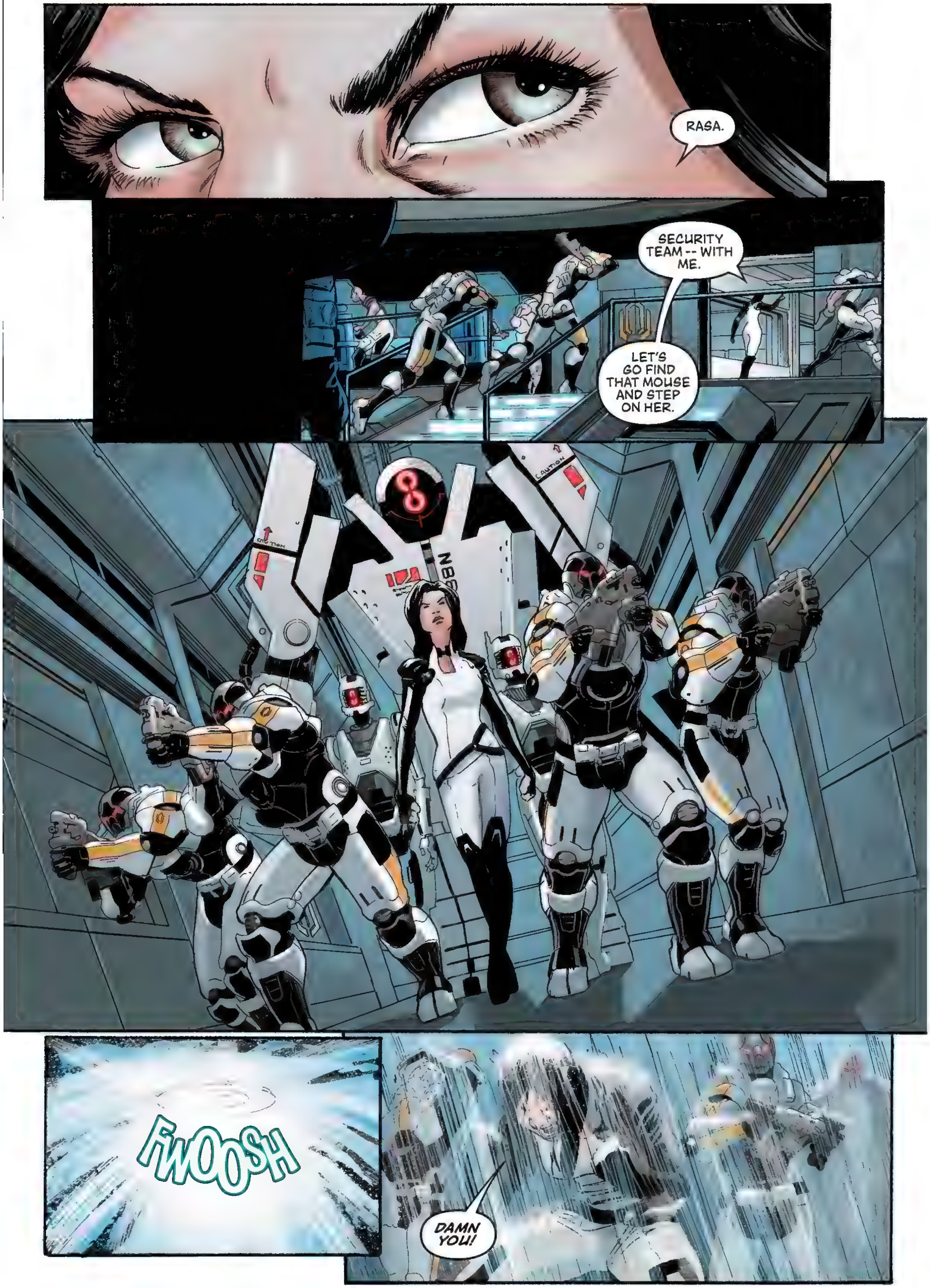

HEY. PAY ATTENTION.
WHAT ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO DO?
FOLLOW THE MINERS. PRETEND TO BE ONE OF THEM.
PICK THEIR POCKETS. LOOT THEIR LOCKERS. BRING IT HERE.
GOOD. GOOD.
YOU COME BACK HERE EMPTY HANDED, *RASA* -- YOU WON'T LIKE WHAT'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU. SO DON'T GET ANY IDEAS.
REMEMBER --
2184. INSIDE THE TOP-SECRET LAZARUS RESEARCH STATION.
"-- I OWN YOU."
NOT ANYMORE.
M1

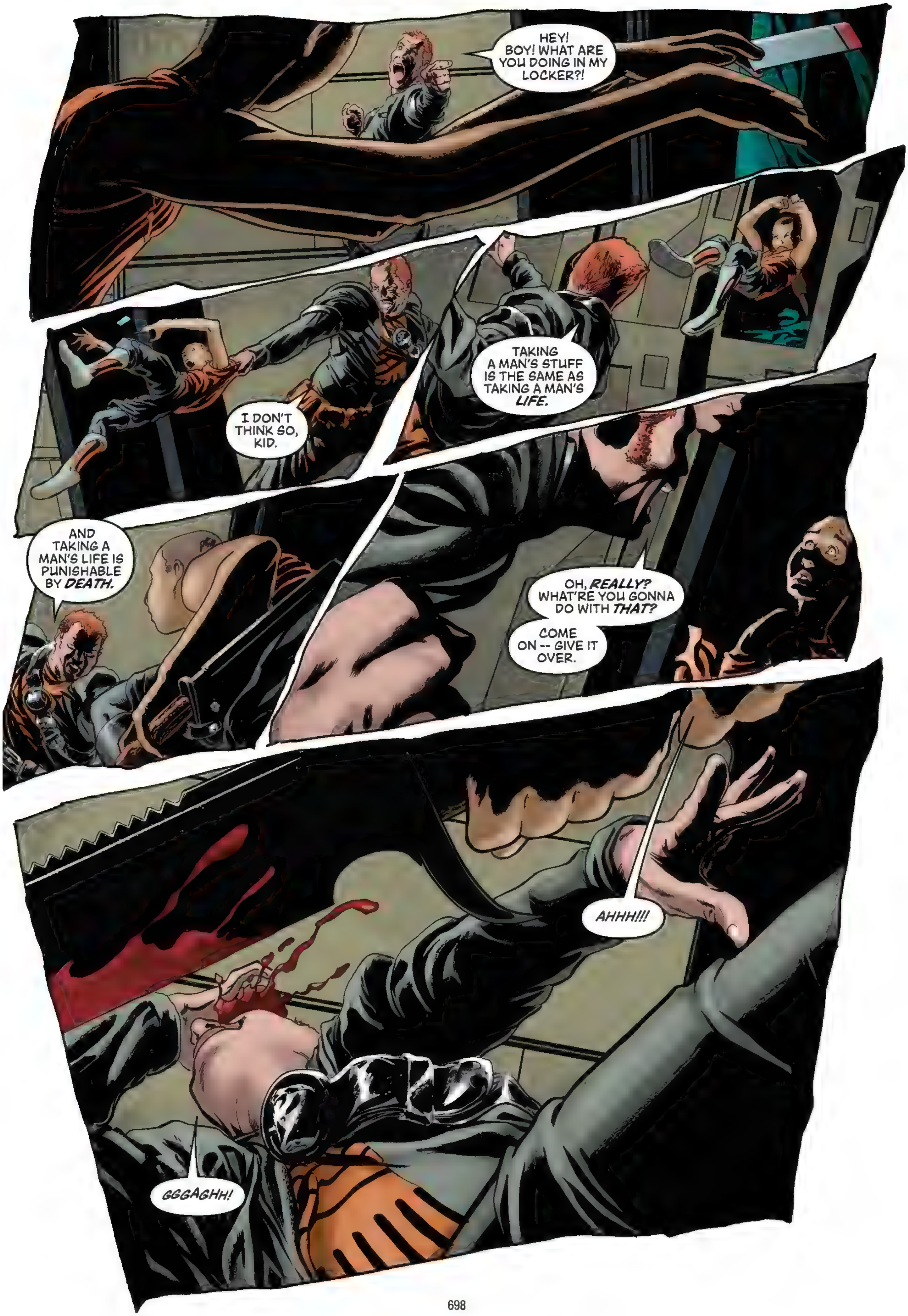

I THOUGHT I'D BE HAPPIER TO SEE THIS THING GO.
I PULLED SO MANY ALL-NIGHTERS IN HERE -- YOU DON'T KNOW HOW MANY TIMES I FANTASIZED ABOUT STUFFING THIS CLONE IN THE FURNACE.
OH, TRUST ME -- I *KNOW.*
BUT NOW THAT THEY'RE ACTUALLY *TOSSING IT OUT...*
...I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW ATTACHED TO IT I WAS.
NOTHING IN LIFE LASTS, BOYS.
BUT IF YOU NEVER HANG ON TO ANYTHING, YOU NEVER HAVE TO LET IT GO, RIGHT?
I NEED ONE OF YOU TO SIGN HERE TO AUTHORIZE THE CLONE'S TERMINATION.
ARE WE AUTHORIZED FOR THAT?
RASA? IS THAT YOU?

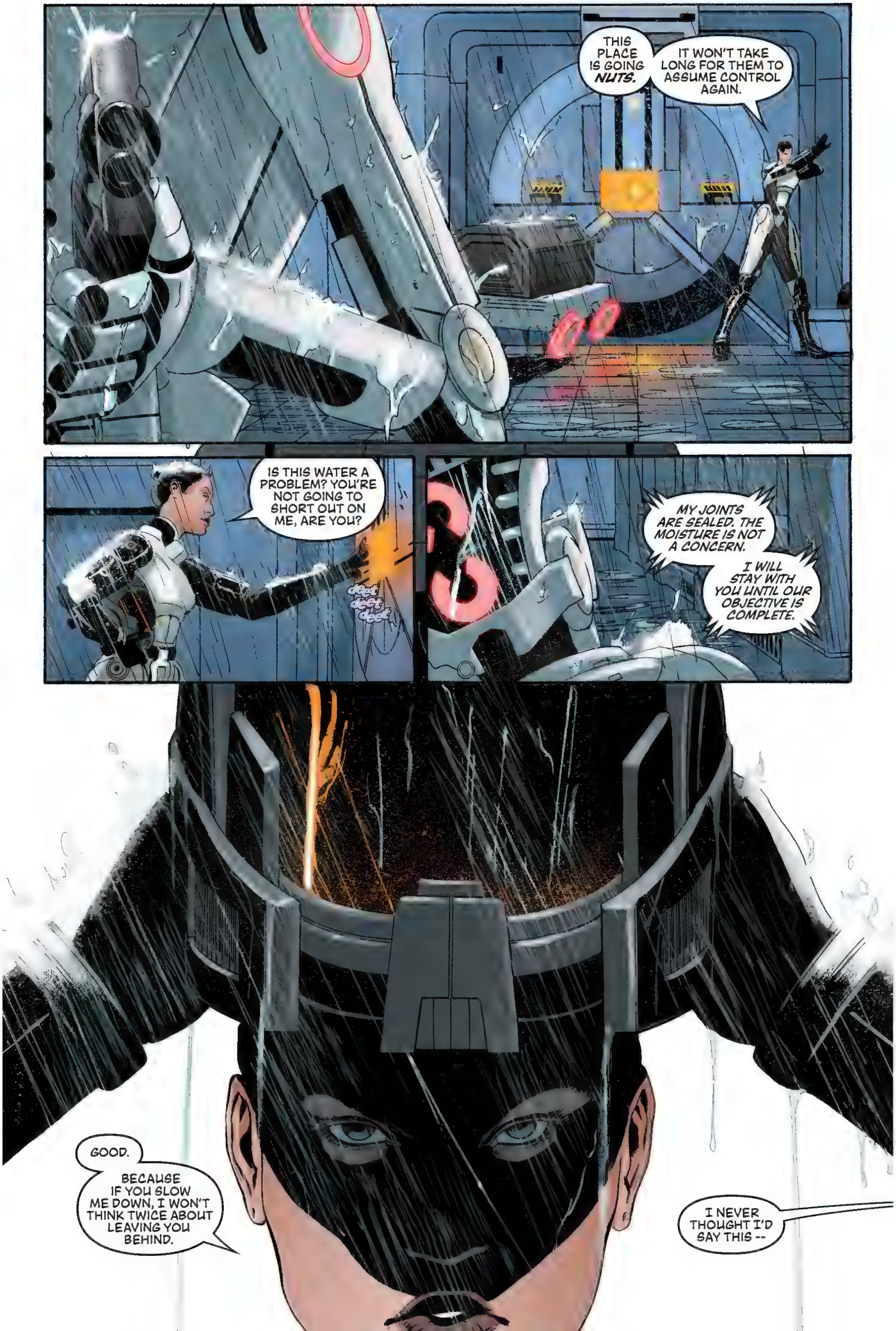

BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM
BLAM
WE HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED.
ACK!
NNGAH!
BRAKKA BRAK

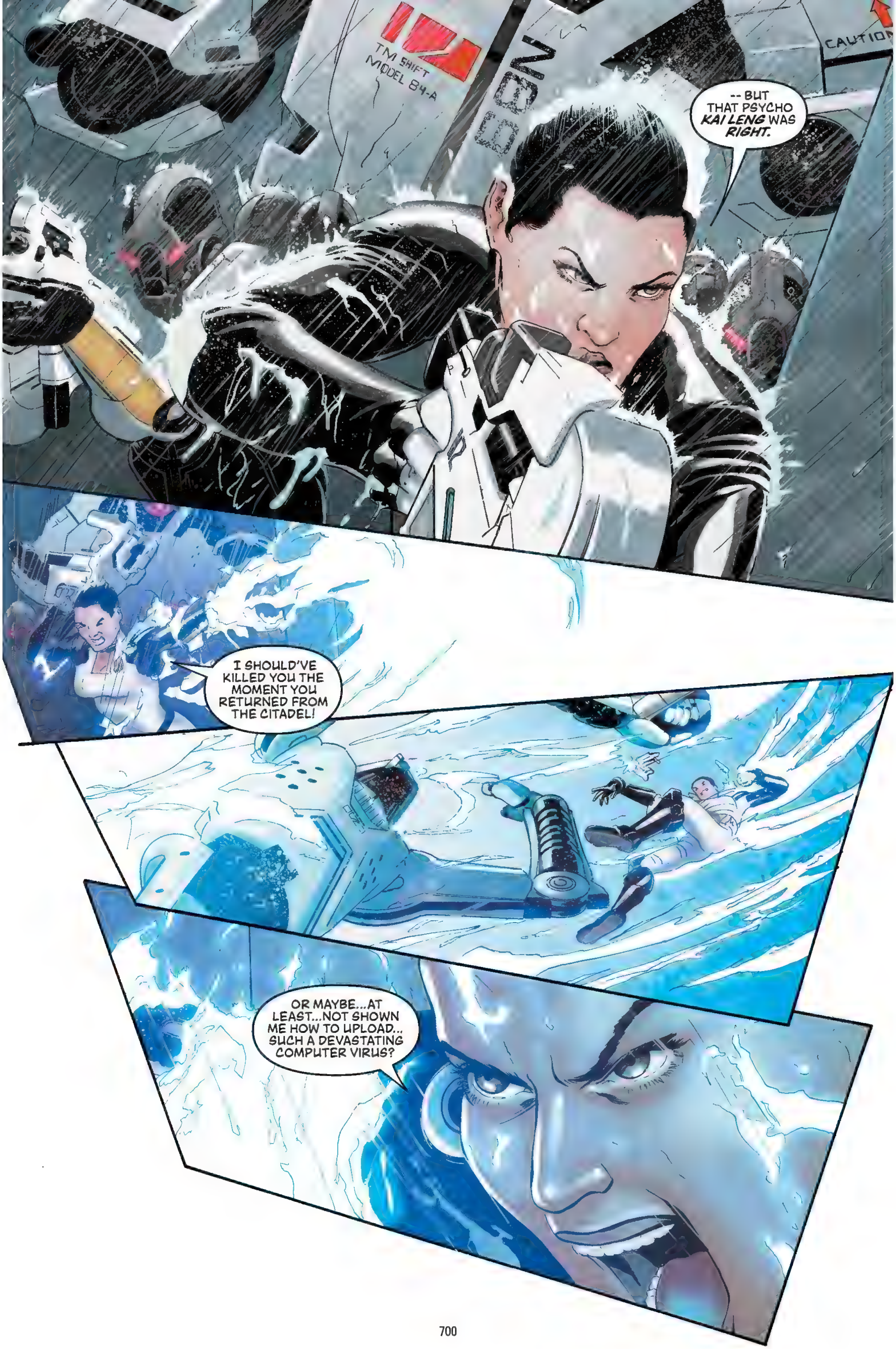

MISS LAWSON!
THE CLONE LABORATORY JUST WENT DARK!
WE'VE LOST ALL CONTACT!
ARE THE NEARBY CORRIDOR CAMERAS STILL FUNCTIONING?
I'M PULLING THEIR FEED NOW.
BLASTO, THE HANAR SPECTRE IN...

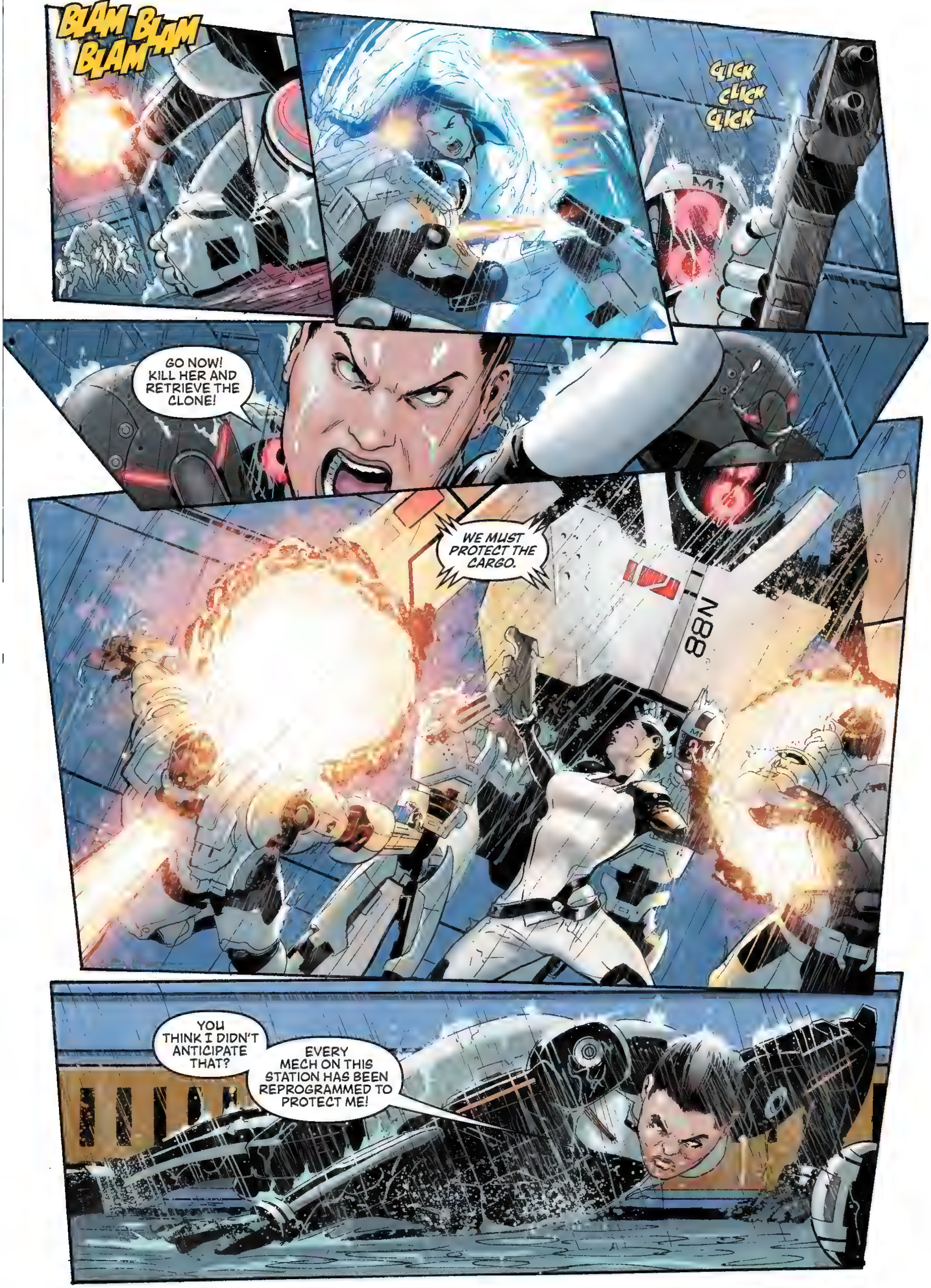

...REQUIEM FOR A REAPER!
...REQUIEM FOR A REAPER!
...REQUIEM FOR A REAPER!
...REQUIEM FOR A REAPER!
...REQUIEM FOR A REAPER!
...REQUIEM FOR A REAPER!
...REQUIEM FOR A REAPER!
...REQUIEM FOR A REAPER!
...REQUIEM FOR A REAPER!
...REQUIEM FOR A REAPER!
...REQUIEM FOR A REAPER!
...REQUIEM FOR A REAPER!
...REQUIEM FOR A REAPER!
...REQUIEM FOR A REAPER!
...REQUIEM FOR A REAPER!
...REQUIEM FOR A REAPER!
IT'S PLAYING EVERYWHERE! THE SIGNAL IS BROADCASTING THROUGH THE ENTIRE STATION!
SECURITY SYSTEMS AREN'T RESPONDING, EITHER!
OUR ENTIRE MAINFRAME HAS BEEN SABOTAGED!

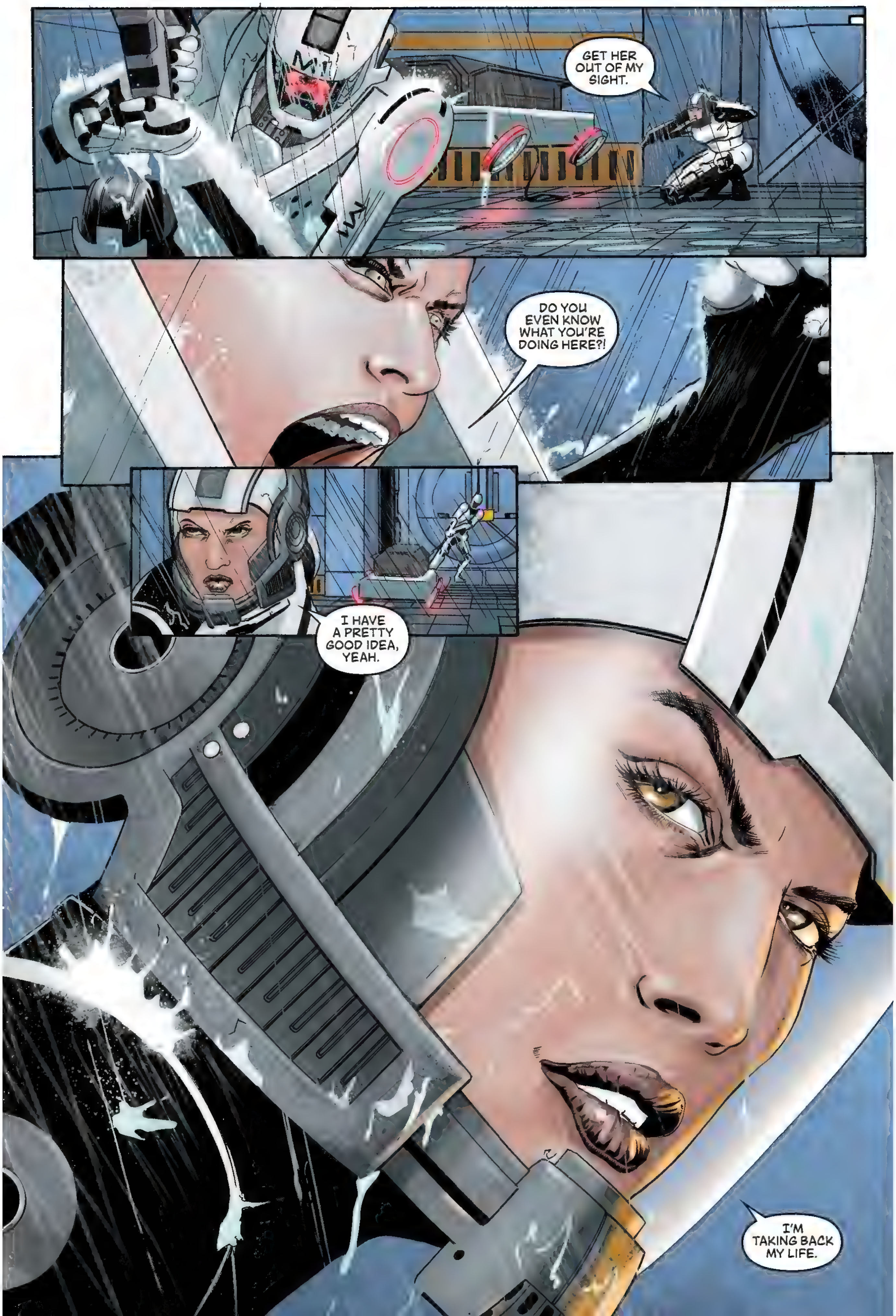

RASA.
SECURITY TEAM -- WITH ME.
LET'S GO FIND THAT MOUSE AND STEP ON HER.
CAUTION
CAUTION
N8
FWOOSH
DAMN YOU!

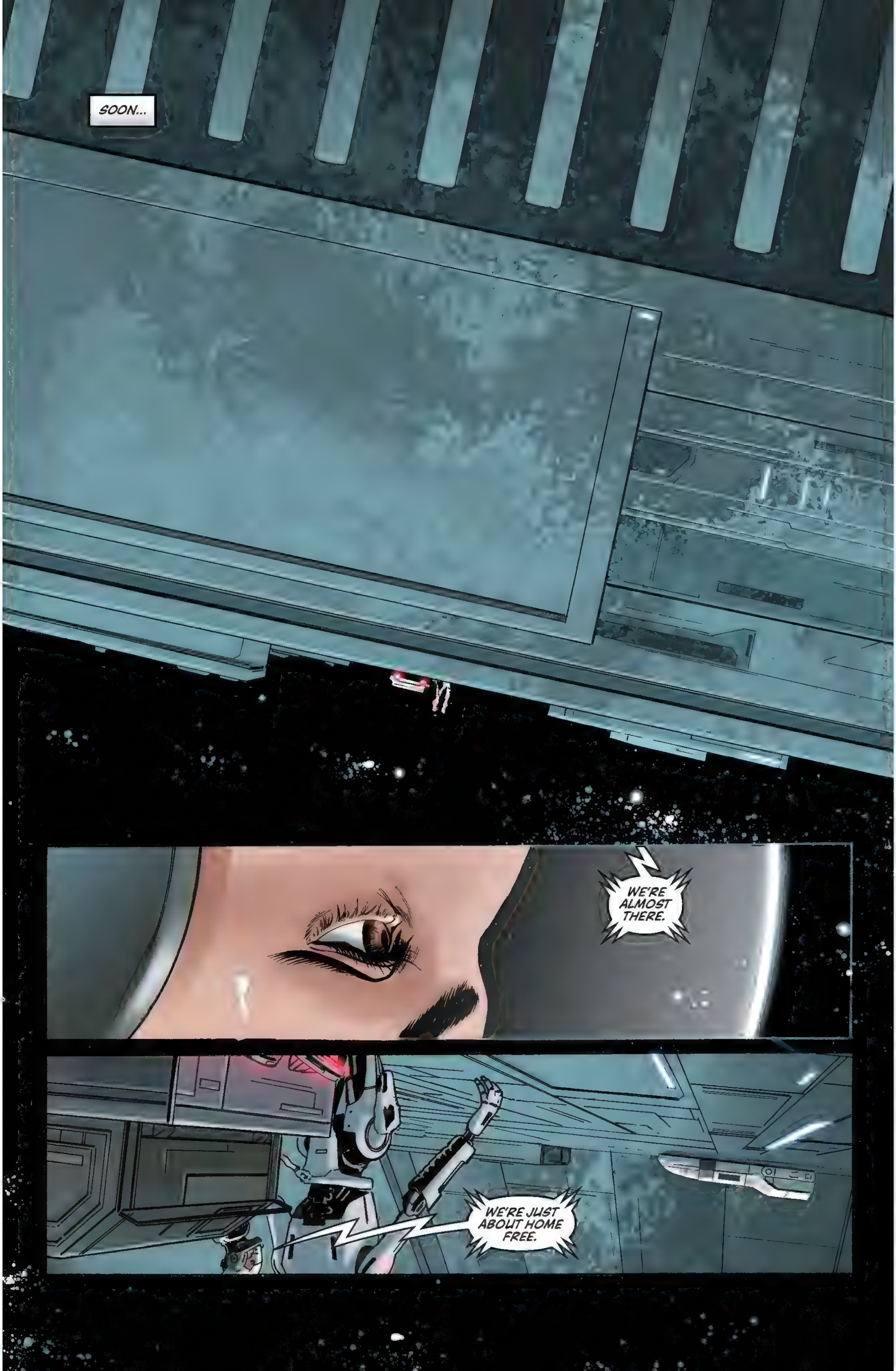

HEY! BOY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY LOCKER?!
TAKING A MAN'S STUFF IS THE SAME AS TAKING A MAN'S *LIFE.*
I DON'T THINK SO, KID.
AND TAKING A MAN'S LIFE IS PUNISHABLE BY *DEATH.*
OH, *REALLY?* WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO WITH *THAT?*
COME ON -- GIVE IT OVER.
AHHH!!!
GGGAGHH!

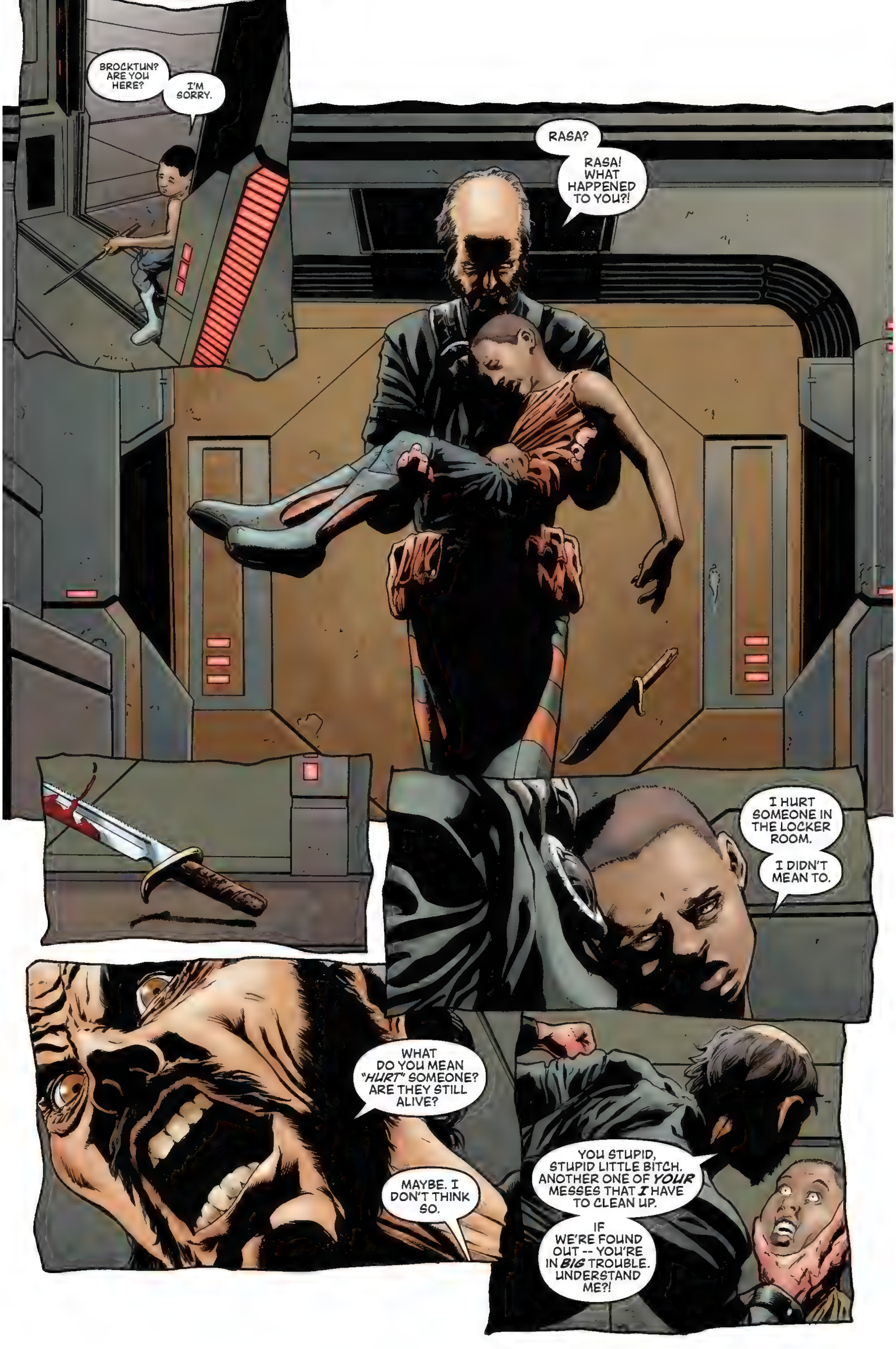

THIS PLACE IS GOING *NUTS.*
IT WON'T TAKE LONG FOR THEM TO ASSUME CONTROL AGAIN.
IS THIS WATER A PROBLEM? YOU'RE NOT GOING TO SHORT OUT ON ME, ARE YOU?
deet deet deet
MY JOINTS ARE SEALED. THE MOISTURE IS NOT A CONCERN.
I WILL STAY WITH YOU UNTIL OUR OBJECTIVE IS COMPLETE.
GOOD.
BECAUSE IF YOU SLOW ME DOWN, I WON'T THINK TWICE ABOUT LEAVING YOU BEHIND.
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SAY THIS --

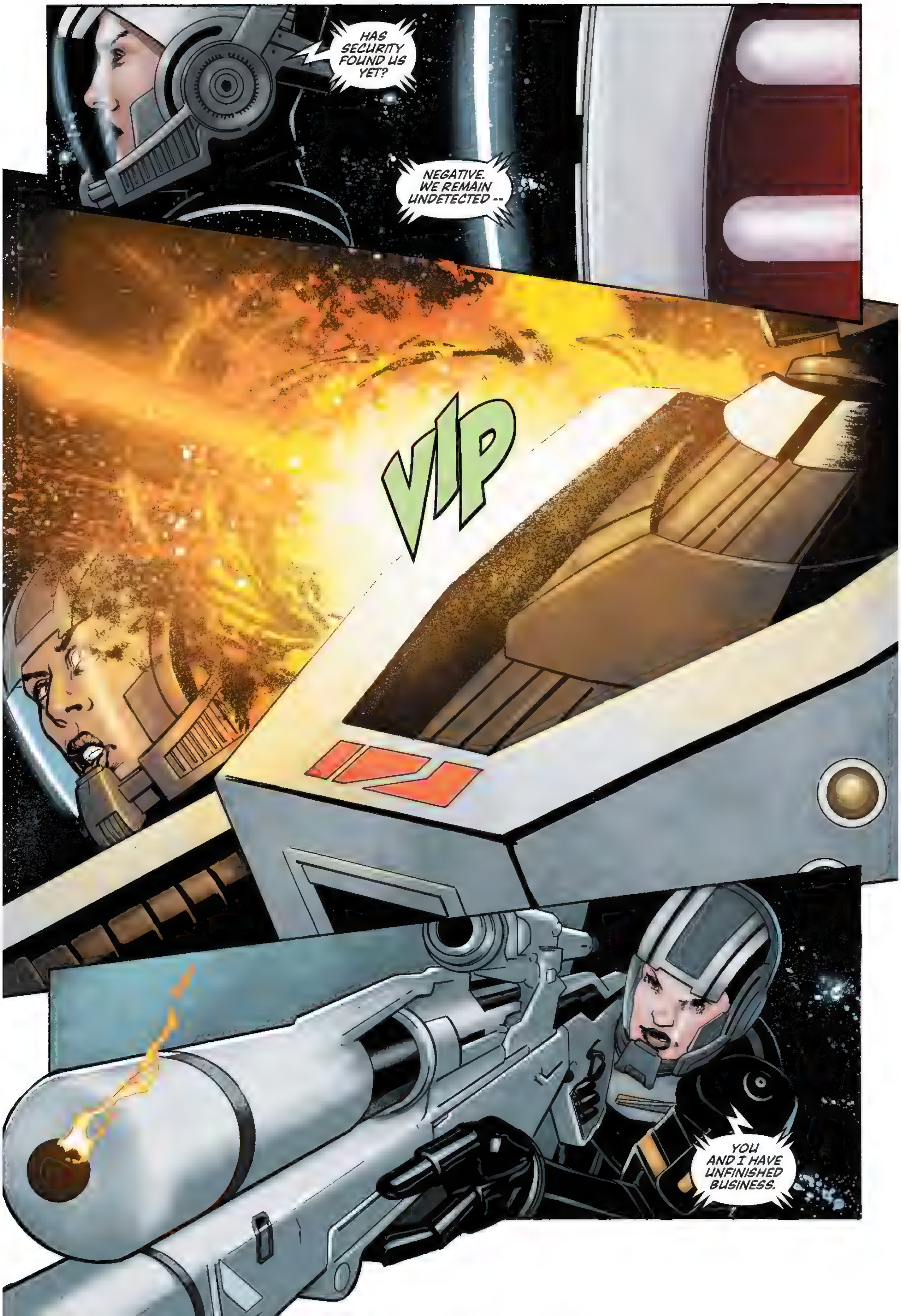

TM SHIFT MODEL 84-A
CAUTION
-- BUT THAT PSYCHO *KAI LENG* WAS *RIGHT.*
I SHOULD'VE KILLED YOU THE MOMENT YOU RETURNED FROM THE CITADEL!
OR MAYBE...AT LEAST...NOT SHOWN ME HOW TO UPLOAD... SUCH A DEVASTATING COMPUTER VIRUS?

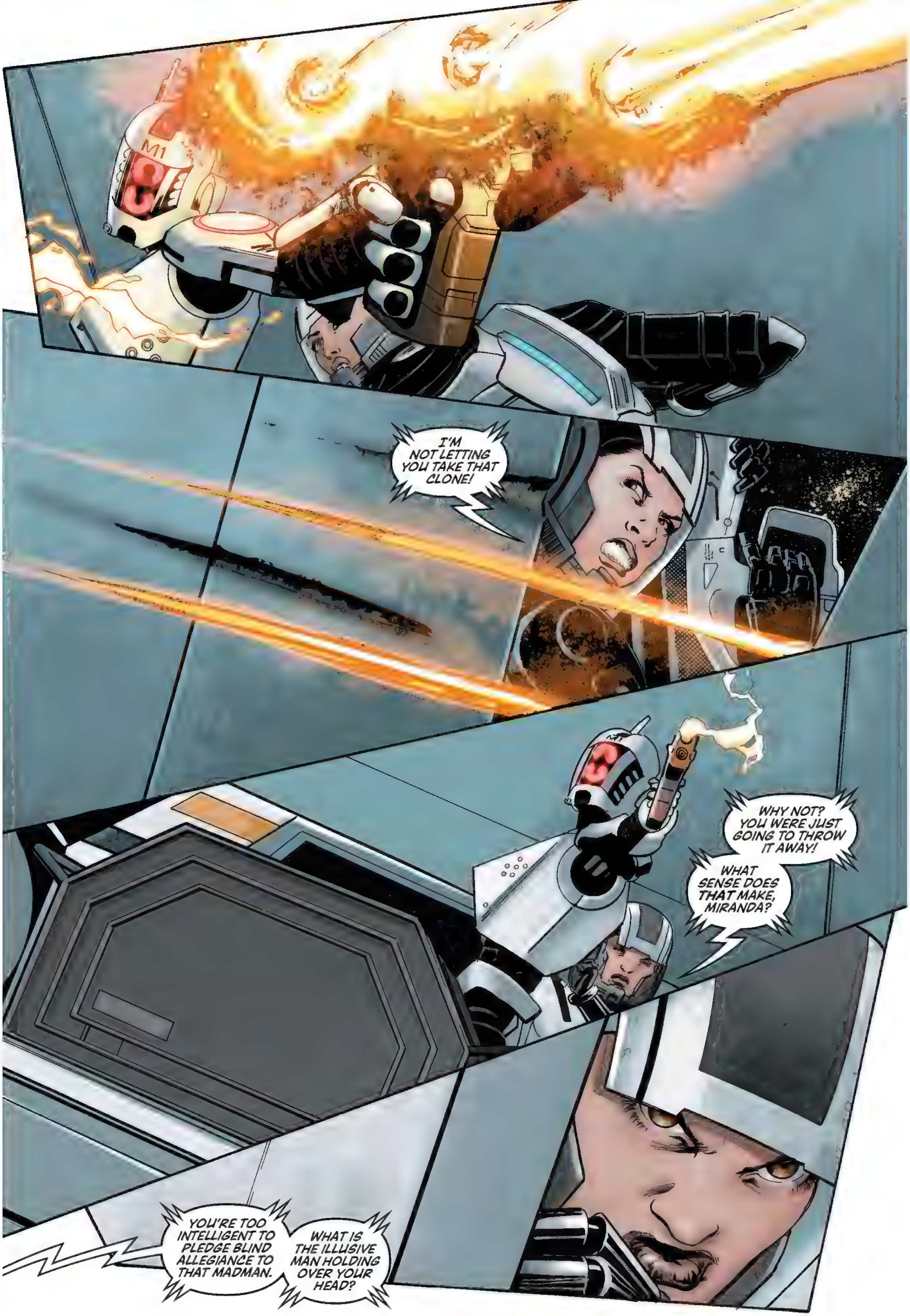

BLAM BLAM BLAM
CLICK CLICK CLICK
GO NOW! KILL HER AND RETRIEVE THE CLONE!
WE MUST PROTECT THE CARGO.
N88
YOU THINK I DIDN'T ANTICIPATE THAT?
EVERY MECH ON THIS STATION HAS BEEN REPROGRAMMED TO PROTECT ME!

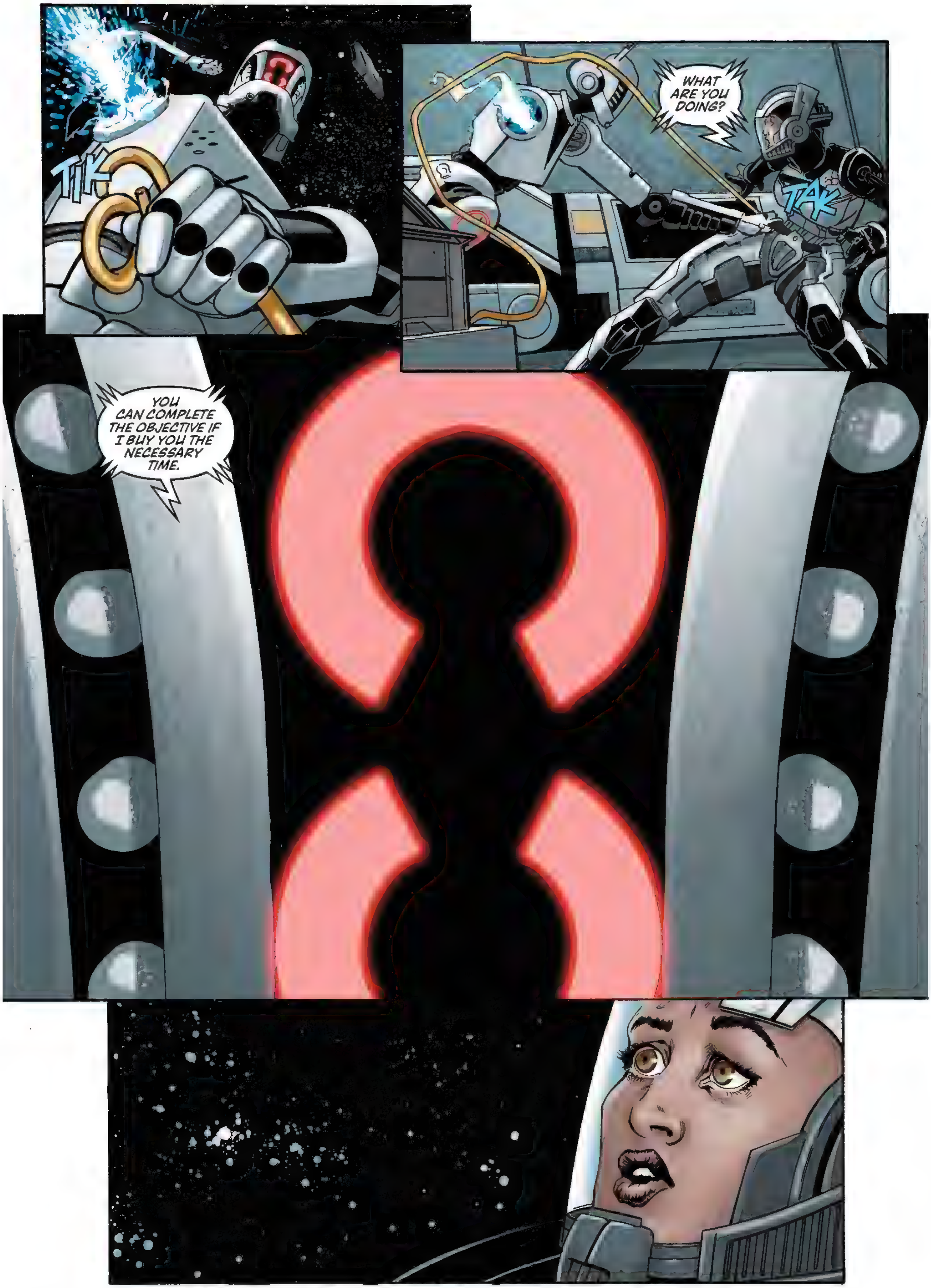

GET HER OUT OF MY SIGHT.
DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING HERE?!
I HAVE A PRETTY GOOD IDEA, YEAH.
I'M TAKING BACK MY LIFE.

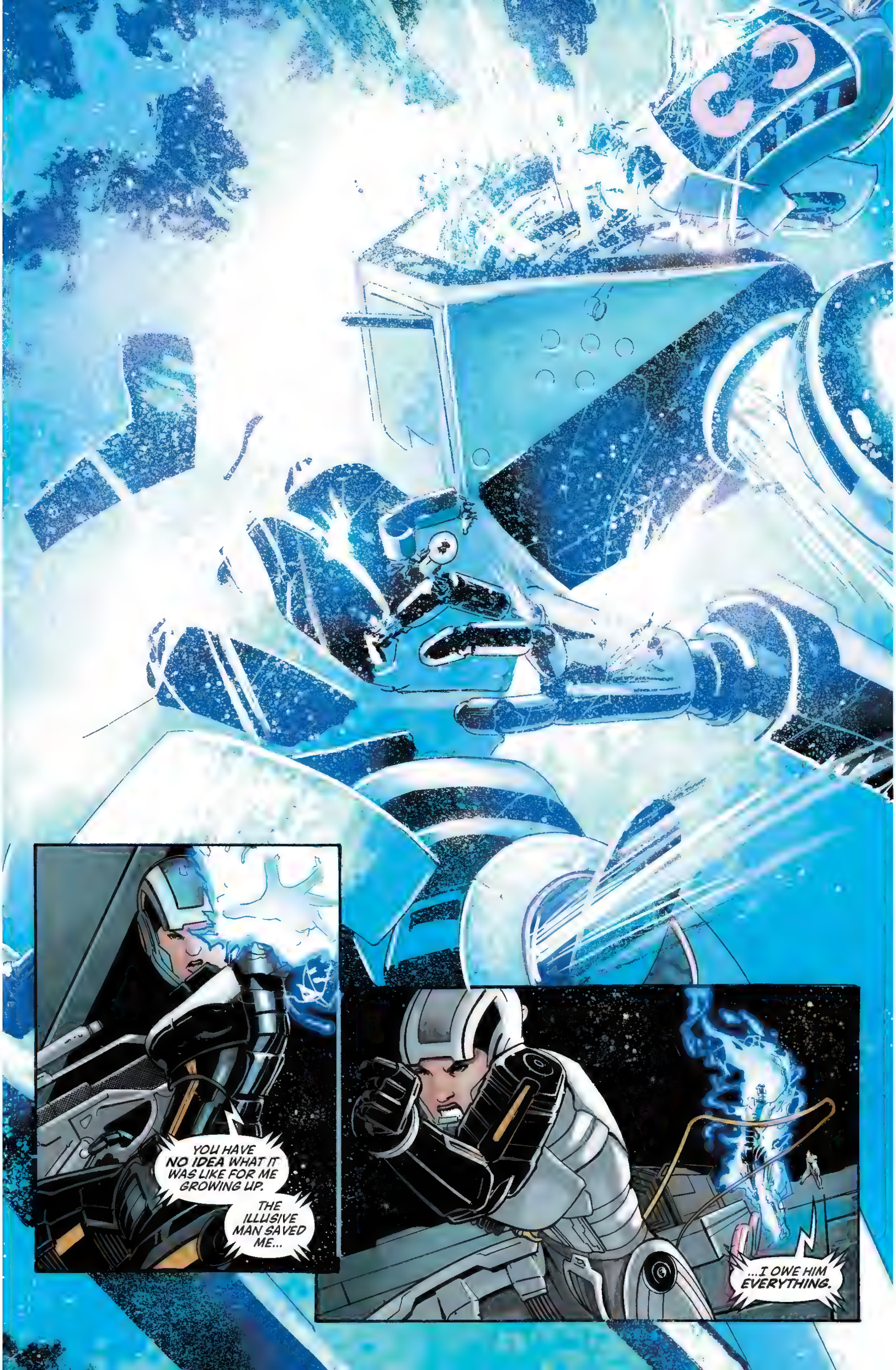

SOON...
WE'RE ALMOST THERE.
WE'RE JUST ABOUT HOME FREE.

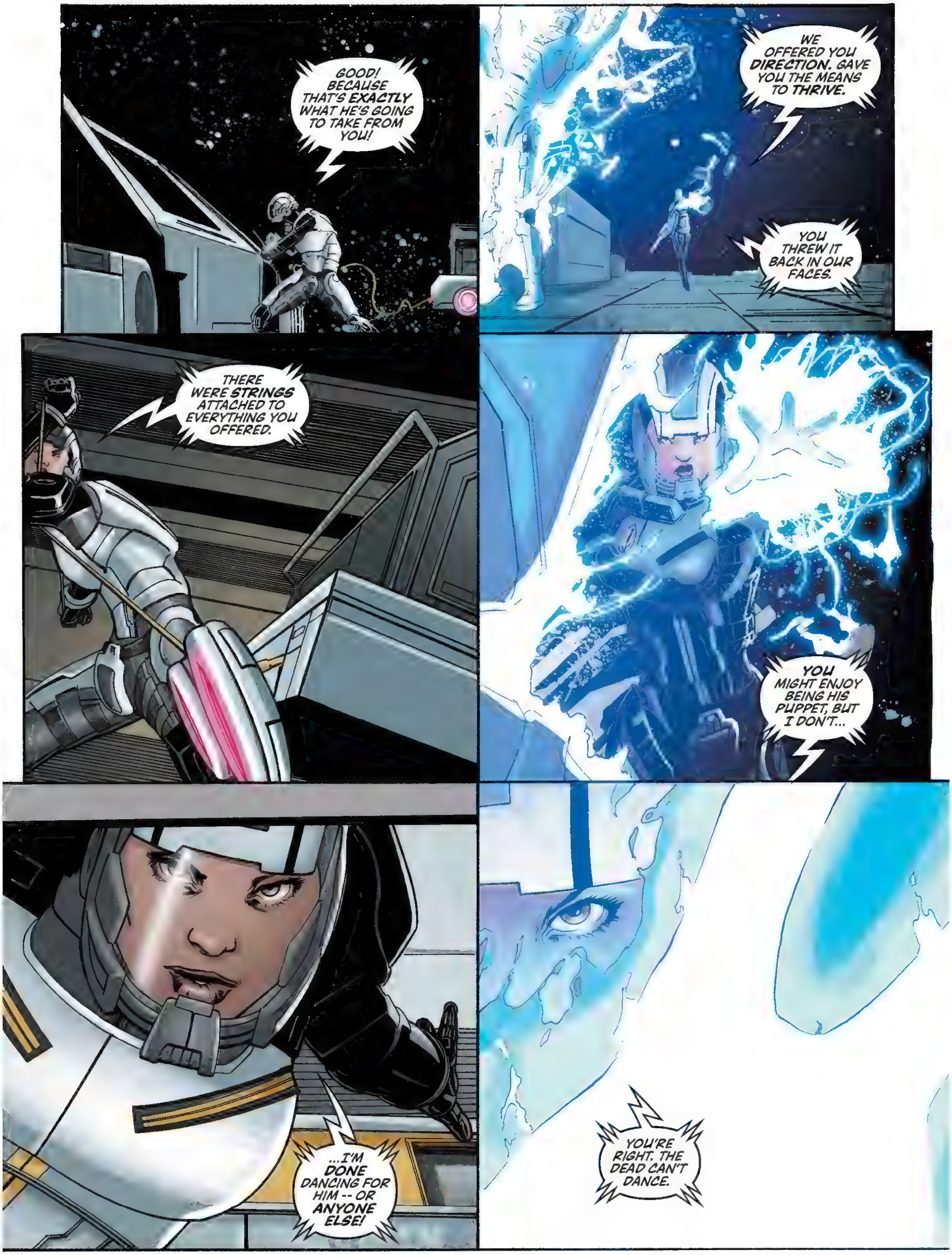

BROCKTUN? ARE YOU HERE?
I'M SORRY.
RASA?
RASA! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?!
I HURT SOMEONE IN THE LOCKER ROOM.
I DIDN'T MEAN TO.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN *"HURT"* SOMEONE? ARE THEY STILL ALIVE?
MAYBE. I DON'T THINK SO.
YOU STUPID, STUPID LITTLE BITCH. ANOTHER ONE OF *YOUR* MESSES THAT *I* HAVE TO CLEAN UP.
IF WE'RE FOUND OUT -- YOU'RE IN *BIG* TROUBLE. UNDERSTAND ME?!

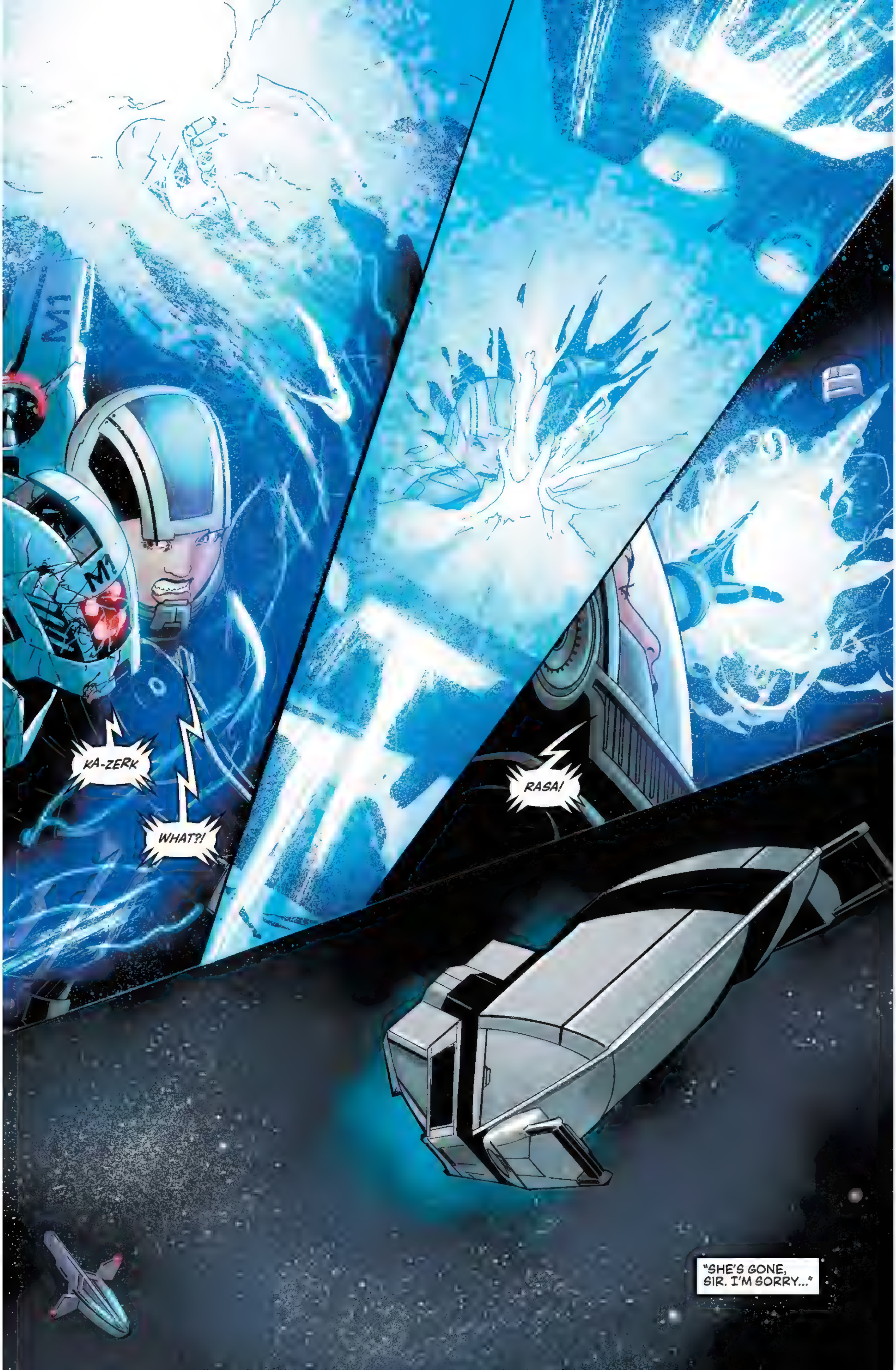

HAS SECURITY FOUND US YET?
NEGATIVE. WE REMAIN UNDETECTED --
VIP
YOU AND I HAVE UNFINISHED BUSINESS.

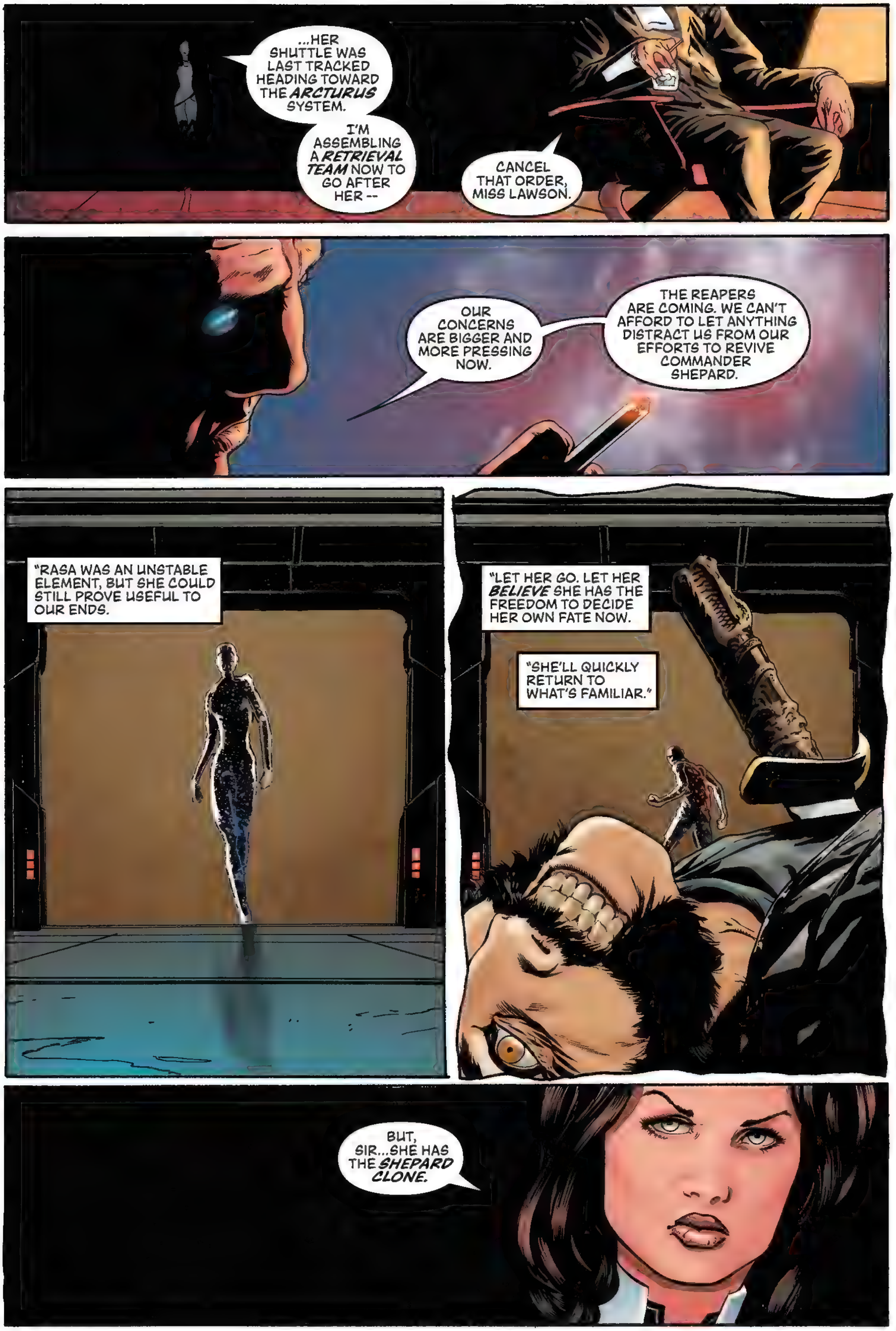

M1
I'M NOT LETTING YOU TAKE THAT CLONE!
WHY NOT? YOU WERE JUST GOING TO THROW IT AWAY!
WHAT SENSE DOES THAT MAKE, MIRANDA?
YOU'RE TOO INTELLIGENT TO PLEDGE BLIND ALLEGIANCE TO THAT MADMAN.
WHAT IS THE ILLUSIVE MAN HOLDING OVER YOUR HEAD?


TIK
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
TAK
YOU CAN COMPLETE THE OBJECTIVE IF I BUY YOU THE NECESSARY TIME.


YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IT WAS LIKE FOR ME GROWING UP.
THE ILLUSIVE MAN SAVED ME...
...I OWE HIM EVERYTHING.


GOOD! BECAUSE THAT'S **EXACTLY** WHAT HE'S GOING TO TAKE FROM YOU!
WE OFFERED YOU **DIRECTION.** GAVE YOU THE MEANS TO **THRIVE.**
YOU THREW IT BACK IN OUR FACES.
THERE WERE **STRINGS** ATTACHED TO EVERYTHING YOU OFFERED.
YOU MIGHT ENJOY BEING HIS PUPPET, BUT I DON'T...
...I'M **DONE** DANCING FOR HIM -- OR **ANYONE ELSE!**
YOU'RE RIGHT. THE DEAD CAN'T DANCE.


M1
M1
KA-ZERK
WHAT?!
RASA!
"SHE'S GONE, SIR. I'M SORRY..."


...HER SHUTTLE WAS LAST TRACKED HEADING TOWARD THE *ARCTURUS* SYSTEM.
I'M ASSEMBLING A *RETRIEVAL TEAM* NOW TO GO AFTER HER --
CANCEL THAT ORDER, MISS LAWSON.
OUR CONCERNS ARE BIGGER AND MORE PRESSING NOW.
THE REAPERS ARE COMING. WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LET ANYTHING DISTRACT US FROM OUR EFFORTS TO REVIVE COMMANDER SHEPARD.
"RASA WAS AN UNSTABLE ELEMENT, BUT SHE COULD STILL PROVE USEFUL TO OUR ENDS.
"LET HER GO. LET HER *BELIEVE* SHE HAS THE FREEDOM TO DECIDE HER OWN FATE NOW.
"SHE'LL QUICKLY RETURN TO WHAT'S FAMILIAR."
BUT, SIR...SHE HAS THE *SHEPARD CLONE.*

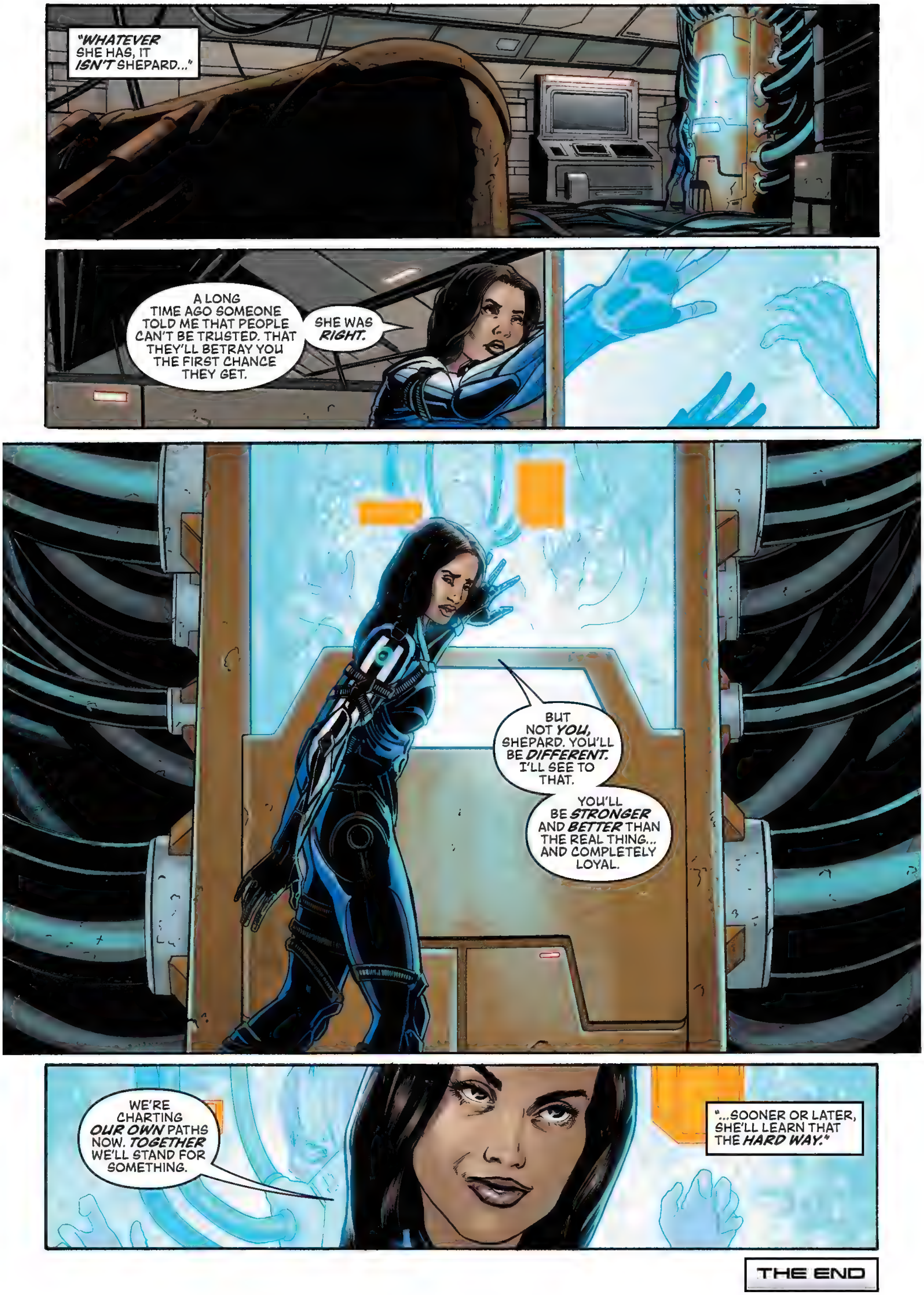

"*WHATEVER* SHE HAS, IT *ISN'T* SHEPARD..."
A LONG TIME AGO SOMEONE TOLD ME THAT PEOPLE CAN'T BE TRUSTED. THAT THEY'LL BETRAY YOU THE FIRST CHANCE THEY GET.
SHE WAS *RIGHT.*
BUT NOT *YOU,* SHEPARD. YOU'LL BE *DIFFERENT.* I'LL SEE TO THAT.
YOU'LL BE *STRONGER* AND *BETTER* THAN THE REAL THING... AND COMPLETELY LOYAL.
WE'RE CHARTING *OUR OWN* PATHS NOW. *TOGETHER* WE'LL STAND FOR SOMETHING.
"...SOONER OR LATER, SHE'LL LEARN THAT THE *HARD WAY.*"
THE END

Illustration by Gabriel Guzmán with Michael Atiyeh

DISCOVERY

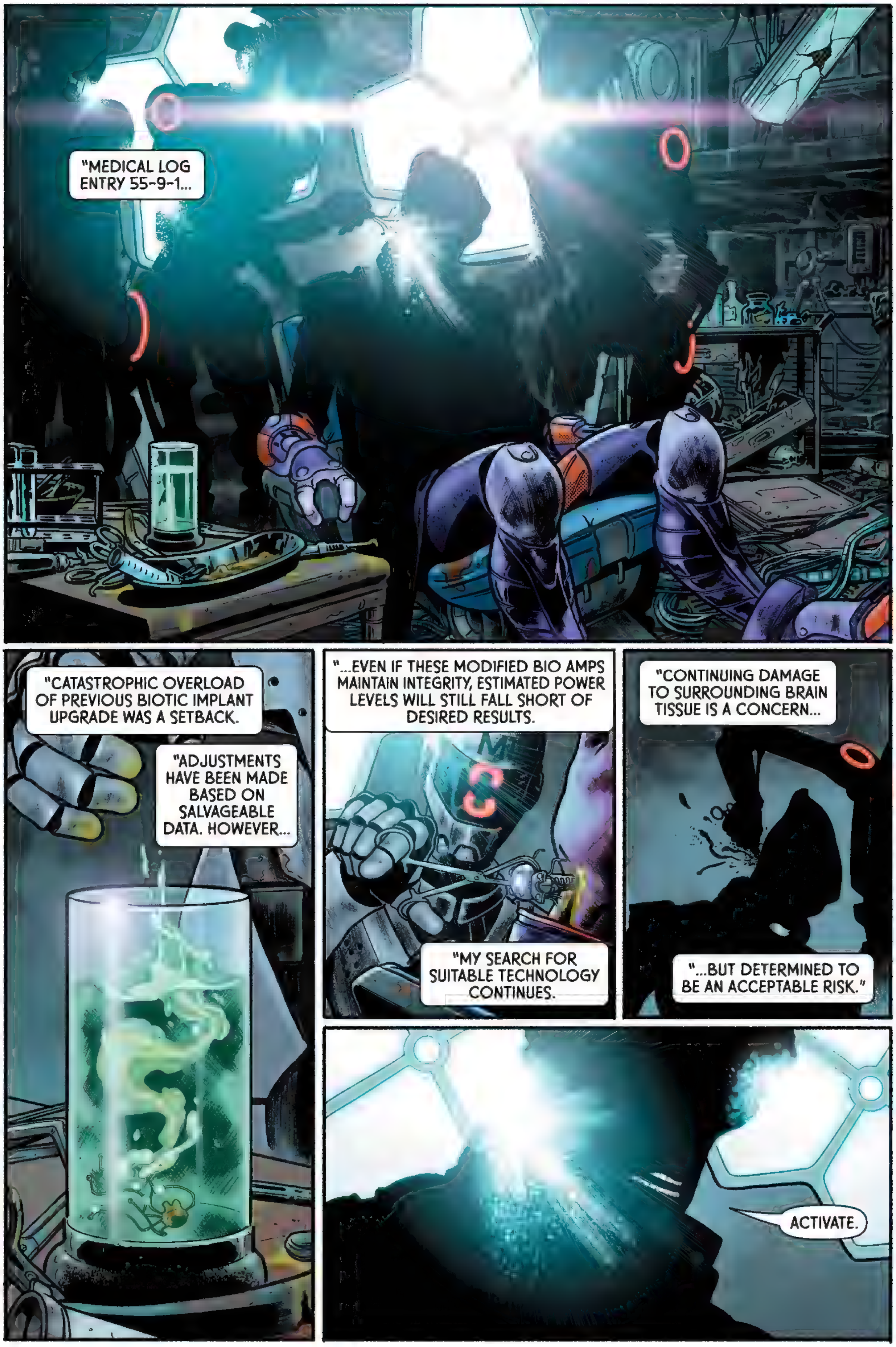
STORY
John Dombrow and Jeremy Barlow

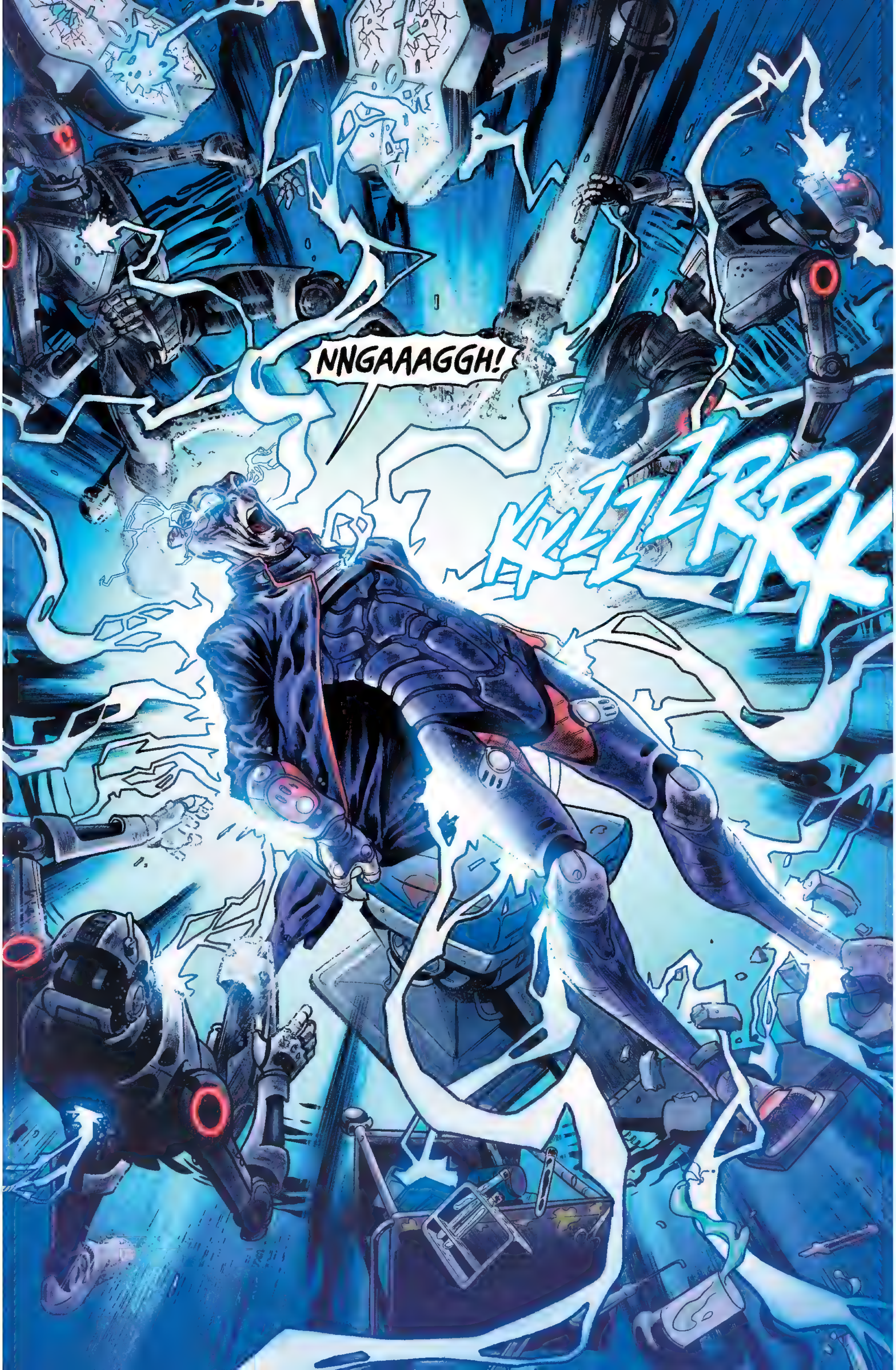
SCRIPT
Jeremy Barlow

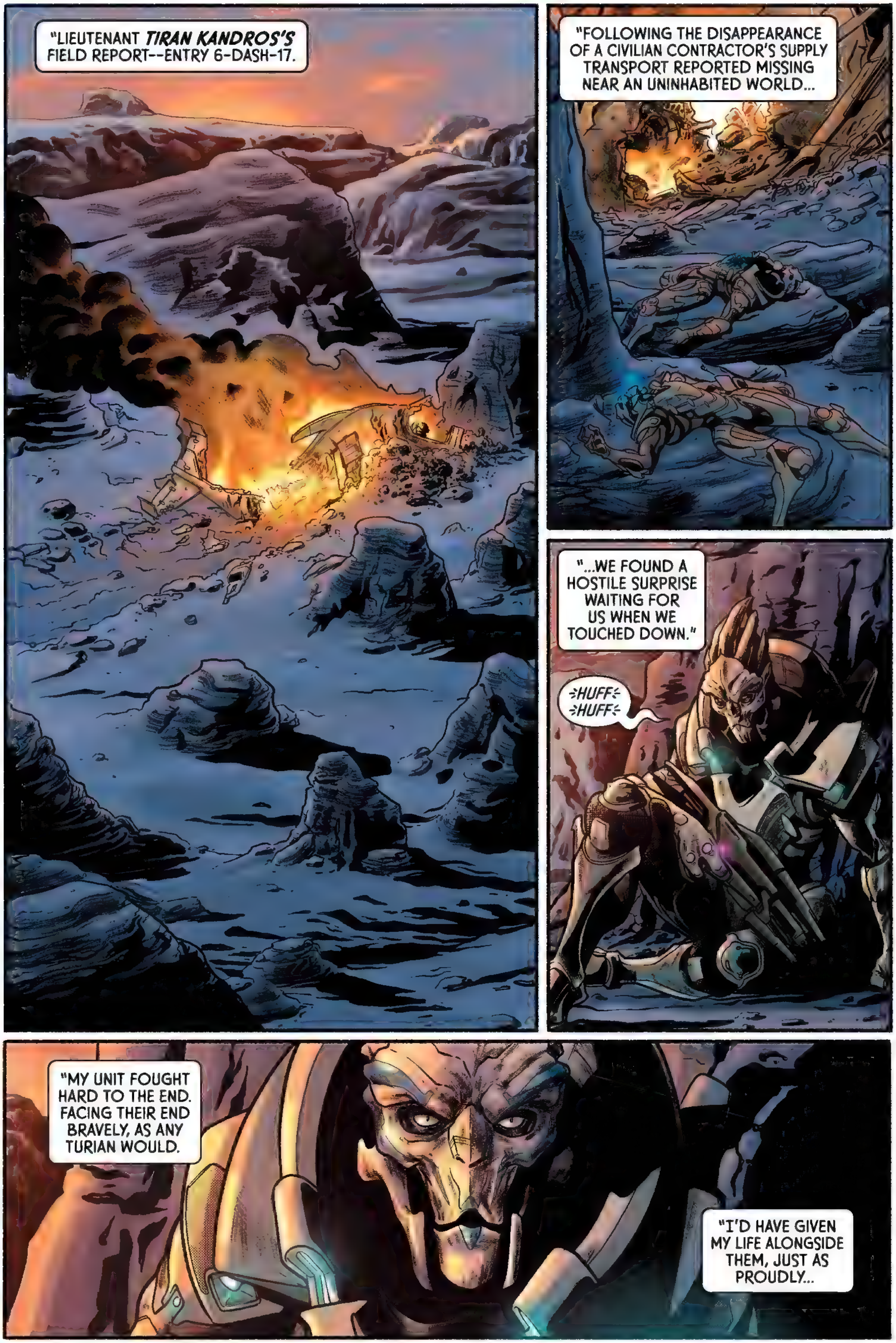
ART
Gabriel Guzmán

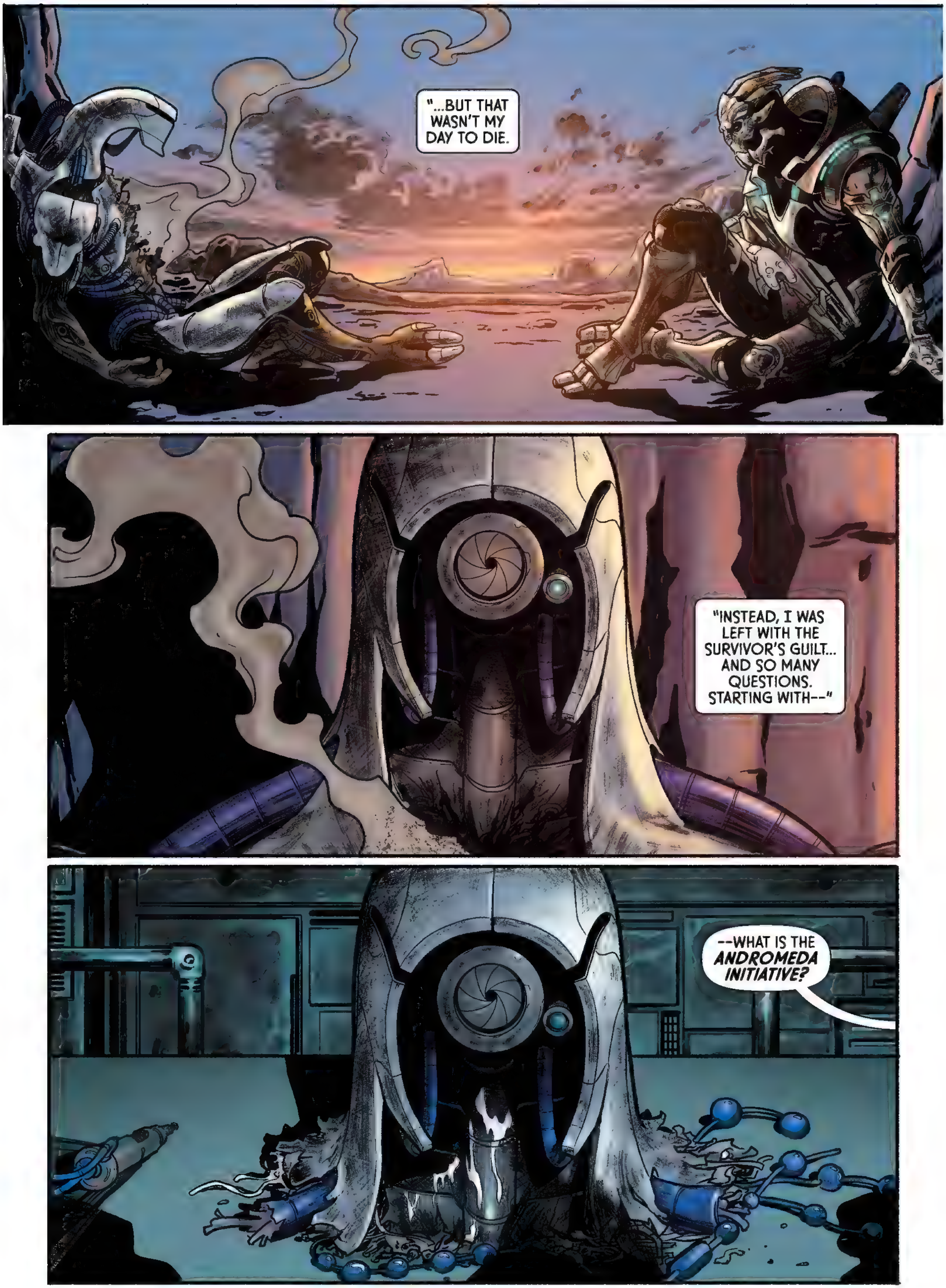
COLORS
Michael Atiyeh

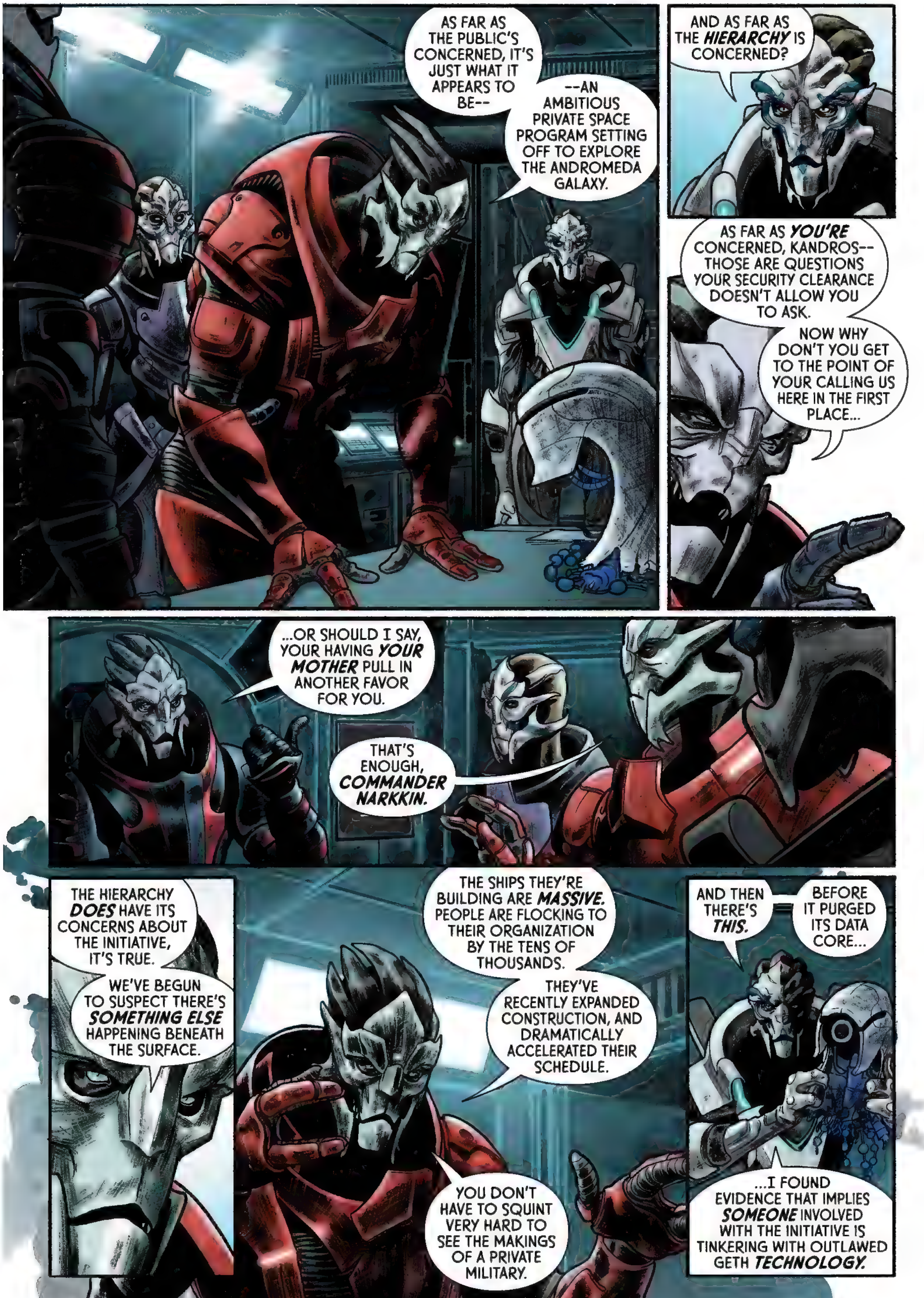
LETTERING
Nate Piekos of Blambot®

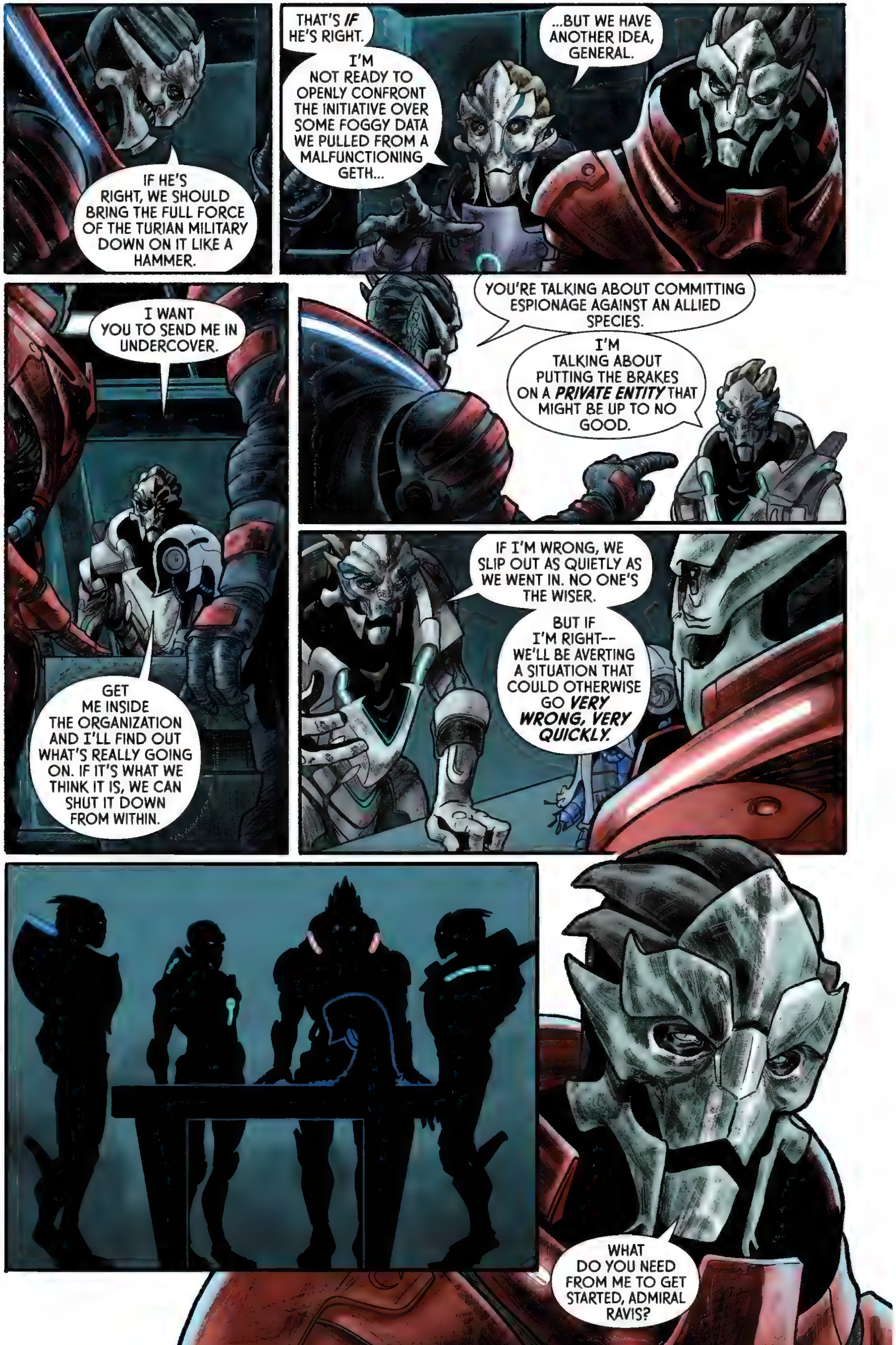

"MEDICAL LOG ENTRY 55-9-1...
"CATASTROPHIC OVERLOAD OF PREVIOUS BIOTIC IMPLANT UPGRADE WAS A SETBACK.
"ADJUSTMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE BASED ON SALVAGEABLE DATA. HOWEVER...
"...EVEN IF THESE MODIFIED BIO AMPS MAINTAIN INTEGRITY, ESTIMATED POWER LEVELS WILL STILL FALL SHORT OF DESIRED RESULTS.
"MY SEARCH FOR SUITABLE TECHNOLOGY CONTINUES.
"CONTINUING DAMAGE TO SURROUNDING BRAIN TISSUE IS A CONCERN...
"...BUT DETERMINED TO BE AN ACCEPTABLE RISK."
ACTIVATE.

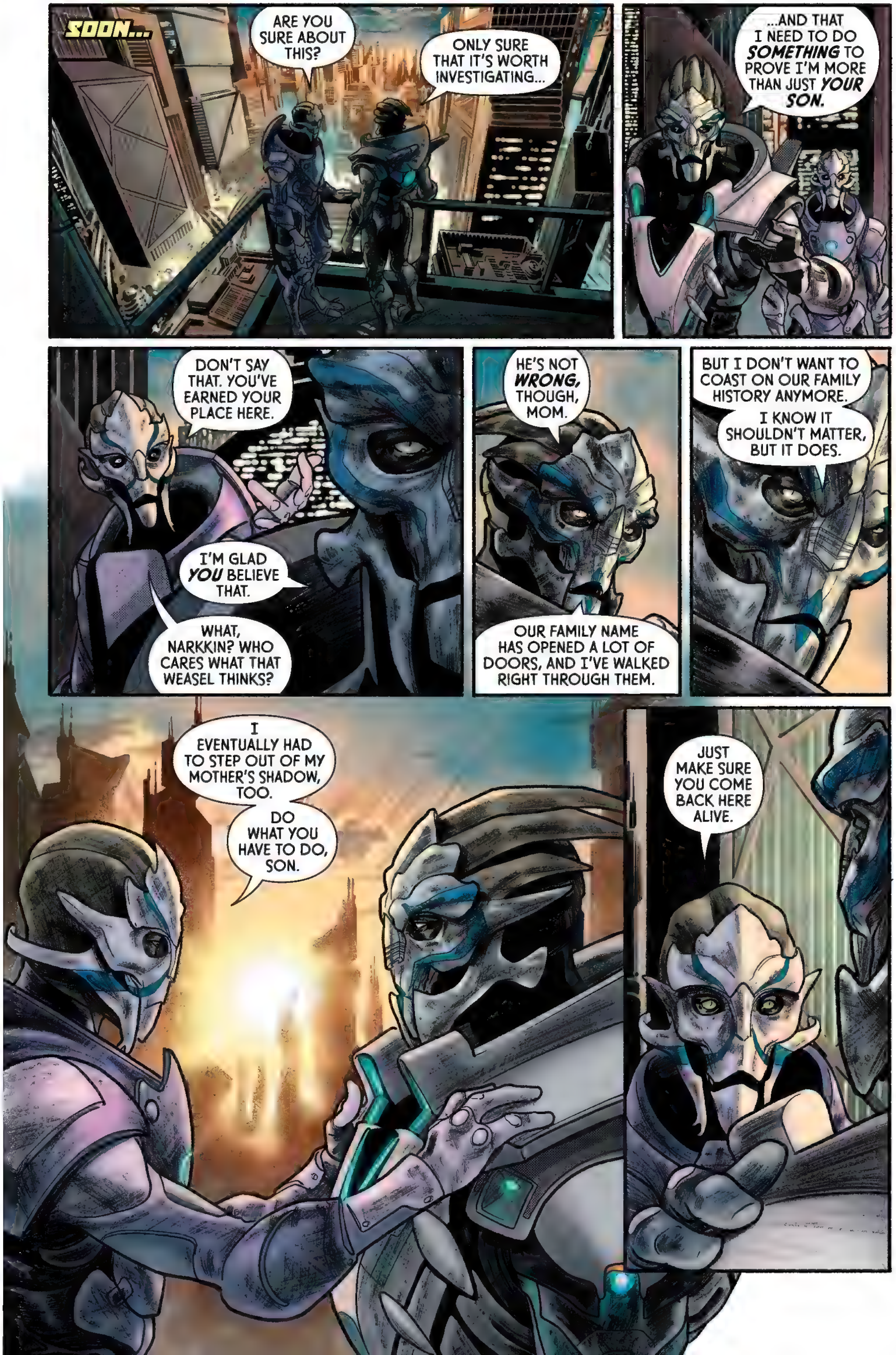

NNGAAAGGH!
KKZZZRRK

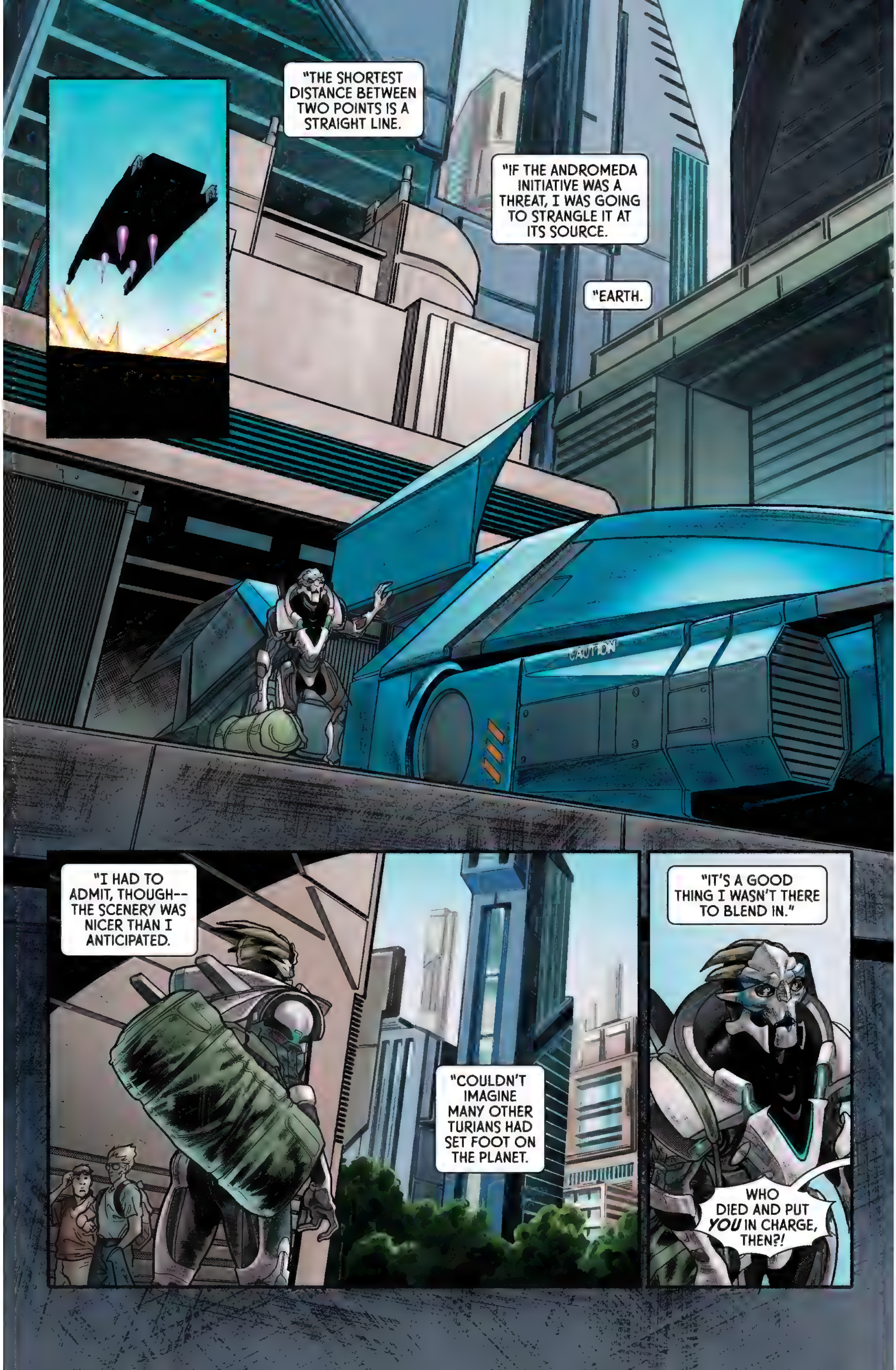

"LIEUTENANT *TIRAN KANDROS'S* FIELD REPORT--ENTRY 6-DASH-17.
"FOLLOWING THE DISAPPEARANCE OF A CIVILIAN CONTRACTOR'S SUPPLY TRANSPORT REPORTED MISSING NEAR AN UNINHABITED WORLD...
"...WE FOUND A HOSTILE SURPRISE WAITING FOR US WHEN WE TOUCHED DOWN."
HUFF HUFF
"MY UNIT FOUGHT HARD TO THE END. FACING THEIR END BRAVELY, AS ANY TURIAN WOULD.
"I'D HAVE GIVEN MY LIFE ALONGSIDE THEM, JUST AS PROUDLY...

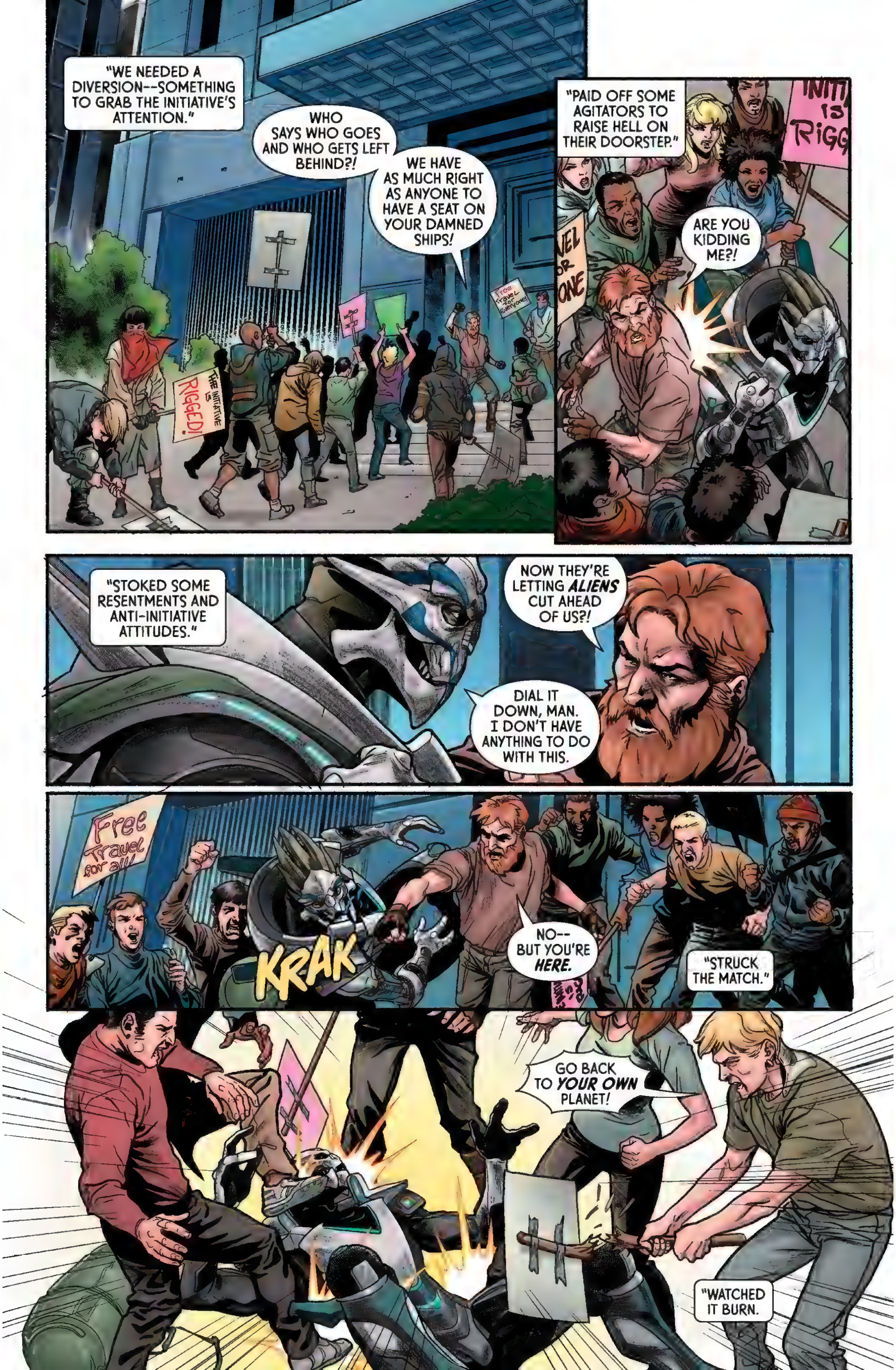

"...BUT THAT WASN'T MY DAY TO DIE.
"INSTEAD, I WAS LEFT WITH THE SURVIVOR'S GUILT... AND SO MANY QUESTIONS. STARTING WITH--"
--WHAT IS THE *ANDROMEDA INITIATIVE?*

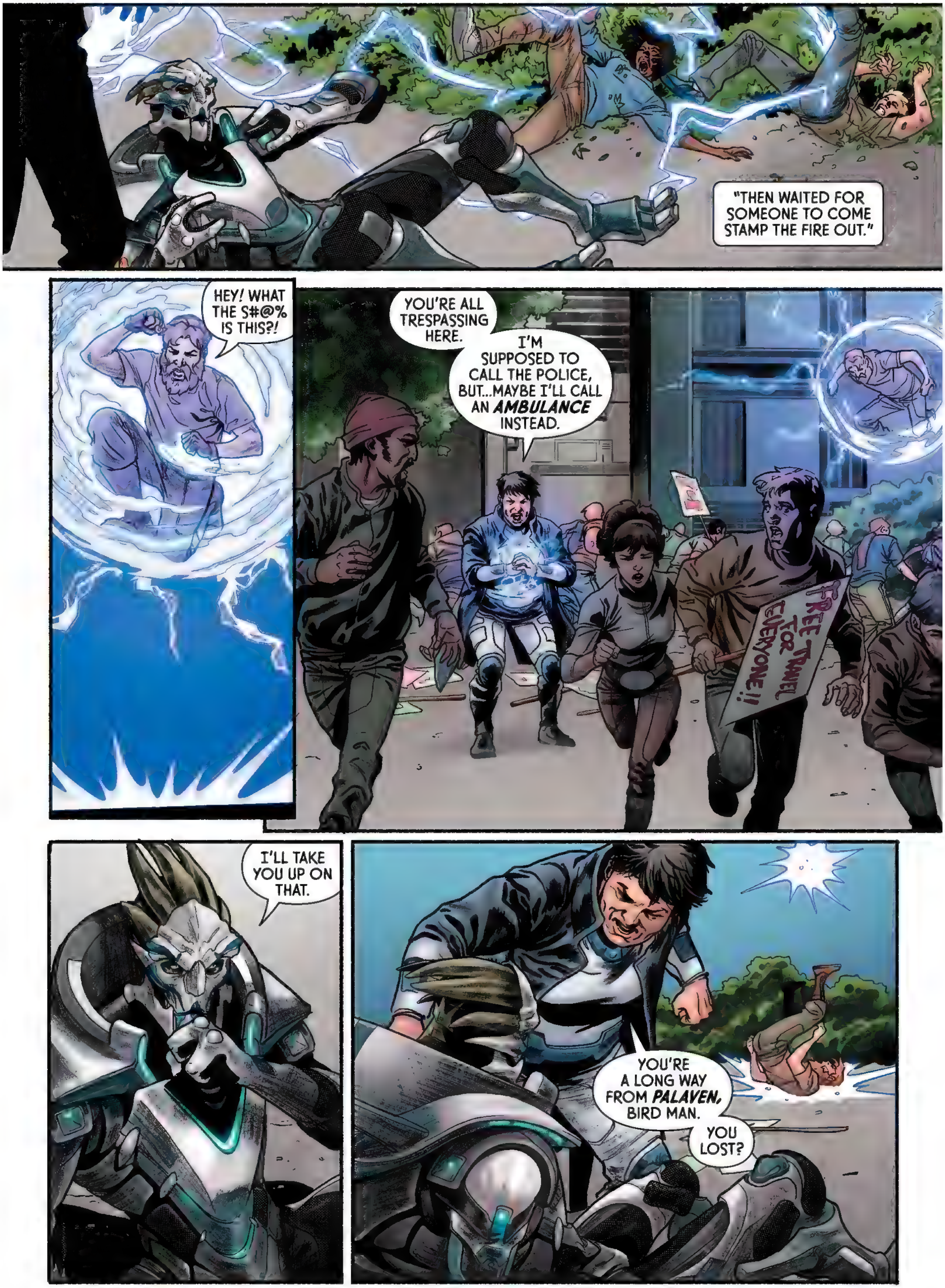

AS FAR AS THE PUBLIC'S CONCERNED, IT'S JUST WHAT IT APPEARS TO BE--
--AN AMBITIOUS PRIVATE SPACE PROGRAM SETTING OFF TO EXPLORE THE ANDROMEDA GALAXY.
AND AS FAR AS THE ***HIERARCHY*** IS CONCERNED?
AS FAR AS ***YOU'RE*** CONCERNED, KANDROS-- THOSE ARE QUESTIONS YOUR SECURITY CLEARANCE DOESN'T ALLOW YOU TO ASK.
NOW WHY DON'T YOU GET TO THE POINT OF YOUR CALLING US HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE...
...OR SHOULD I SAY, YOUR HAVING ***YOUR MOTHER*** PULL IN ANOTHER FAVOR FOR YOU.
THAT'S ENOUGH, ***COMMANDER NARKKIN.***
THE HIERARCHY ***DOES*** HAVE ITS CONCERNS ABOUT THE INITIATIVE, IT'S TRUE.
WE'VE BEGUN TO SUSPECT THERE'S ***SOMETHING ELSE*** HAPPENING BENEATH THE SURFACE.
THE SHIPS THEY'RE BUILDING ARE ***MASSIVE.*** PEOPLE ARE FLOCKING TO THEIR ORGANIZATION BY THE TENS OF THOUSANDS.
THEY'VE RECENTLY EXPANDED CONSTRUCTION, AND DRAMATICALLY ACCELERATED THEIR SCHEDULE.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO SQUINT VERY HARD TO SEE THE MAKINGS OF A PRIVATE MILITARY.
AND THEN THERE'S ***THIS.***
BEFORE IT PURGED ITS DATA CORE...
...I FOUND EVIDENCE THAT IMPLIES ***SOMEONE*** INVOLVED WITH THE INITIATIVE IS TINKERING WITH OUTLAWED GETH ***TECHNOLOGY.***

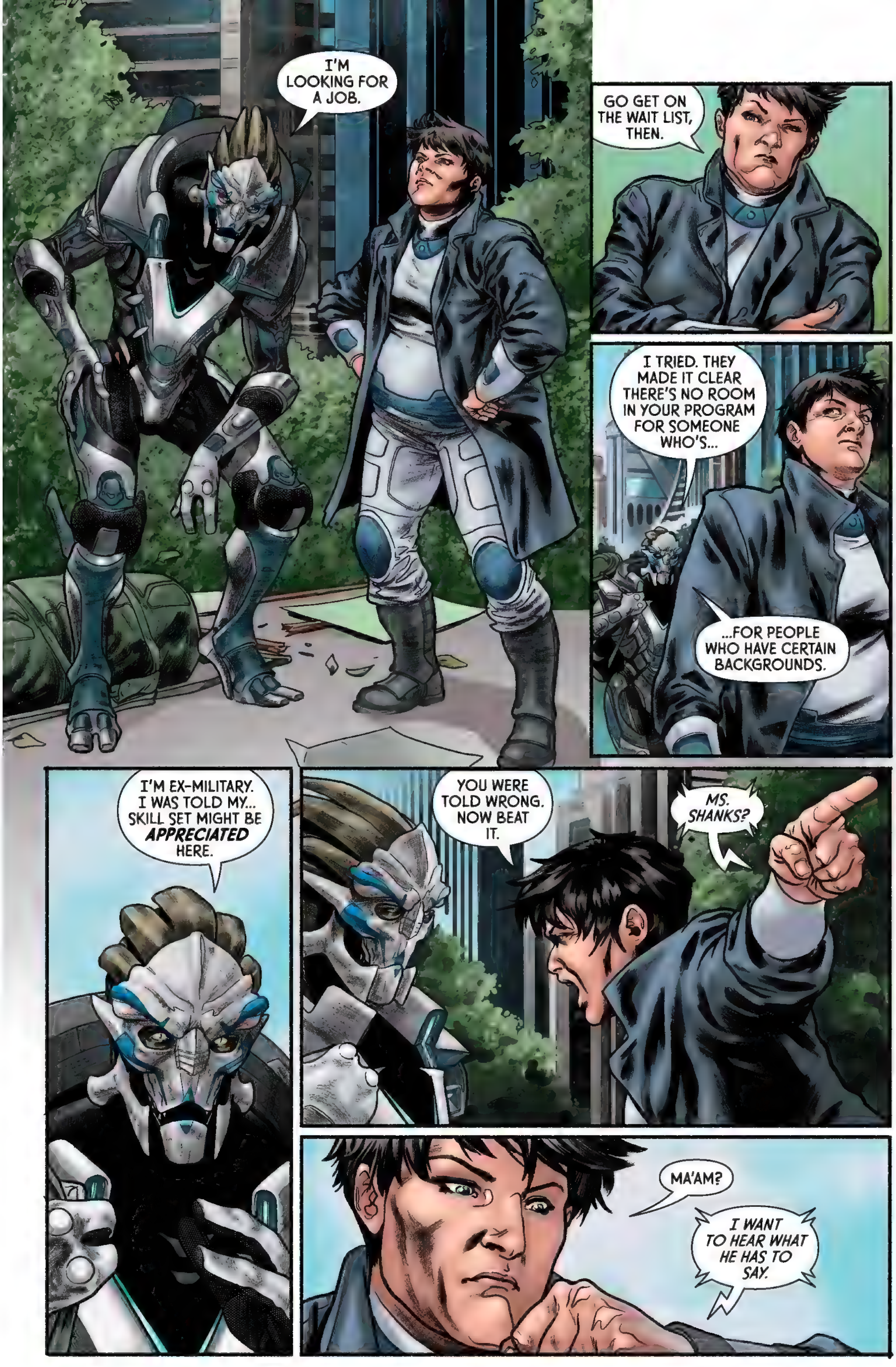

IF HE'S RIGHT, WE SHOULD BRING THE FULL FORCE OF THE TURIAN MILITARY DOWN ON IT LIKE A HAMMER.
THAT'S *IF* HE'S RIGHT.
I'M NOT READY TO OPENLY CONFRONT THE INITIATIVE OVER SOME FOGGY DATA WE PULLED FROM A MALFUNCTIONING GETH...
...BUT WE HAVE ANOTHER IDEA, GENERAL.
I WANT YOU TO SEND ME IN UNDERCOVER.
GET ME INSIDE THE ORGANIZATION AND I'LL FIND OUT WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON. IF IT'S WHAT WE THINK IT IS, WE CAN SHUT IT DOWN FROM WITHIN.
YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT COMMITTING ESPIONAGE AGAINST AN ALLIED SPECIES.
I'M TALKING ABOUT PUTTING THE BRAKES ON A ***PRIVATE ENTITY*** THAT MIGHT BE UP TO NO GOOD.
IF I'M WRONG, WE SLIP OUT AS QUIETLY AS WE WENT IN. NO ONE'S THE WISER.
BUT IF I'M RIGHT-- WE'LL BE AVERTING A SITUATION THAT COULD OTHERWISE GO ***VERY WRONG, VERY QUICKLY.***
WHAT DO YOU NEED FROM ME TO GET STARTED, ADMIRAL RAVIS?

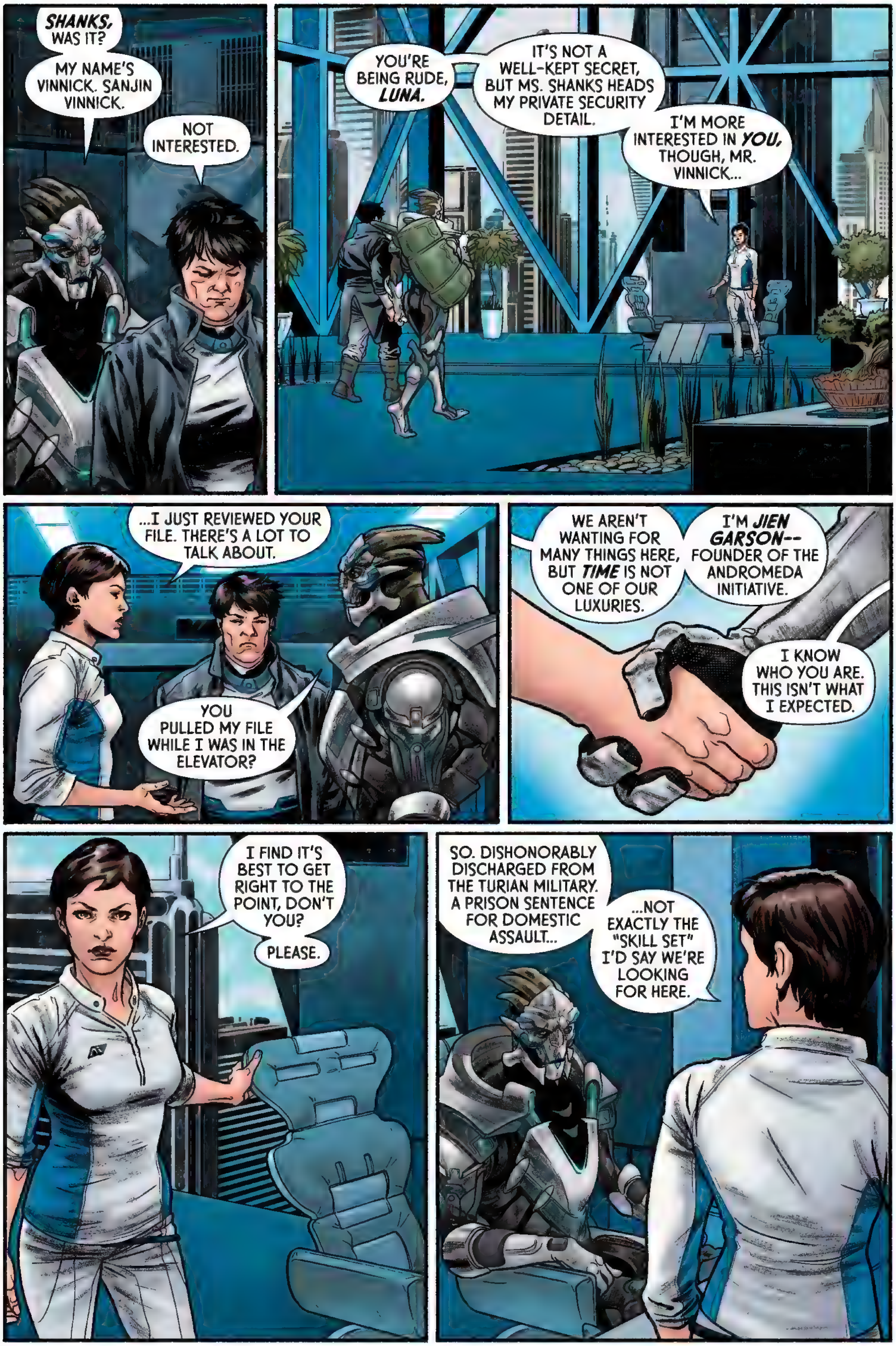

SOON...
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS?
ONLY SURE THAT IT'S WORTH INVESTIGATING...
...AND THAT I NEED TO DO *SOMETHING* TO PROVE I'M MORE THAN JUST *YOUR SON.*
DON'T SAY THAT. YOU'VE EARNED YOUR PLACE HERE.
I'M GLAD *YOU* BELIEVE THAT.
WHAT, NARKKIN? WHO CARES WHAT THAT WEASEL THINKS?
HE'S NOT *WRONG,* THOUGH, MOM.
OUR FAMILY NAME HAS OPENED A LOT OF DOORS, AND I'VE WALKED RIGHT THROUGH THEM.
BUT I DON'T WANT TO COAST ON OUR FAMILY HISTORY ANYMORE.
I KNOW IT SHOULDN'T MATTER, BUT IT DOES.
I EVENTUALLY HAD TO STEP OUT OF MY MOTHER'S SHADOW, TOO.
DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO, SON.
JUST MAKE SURE YOU COME BACK HERE ALIVE.

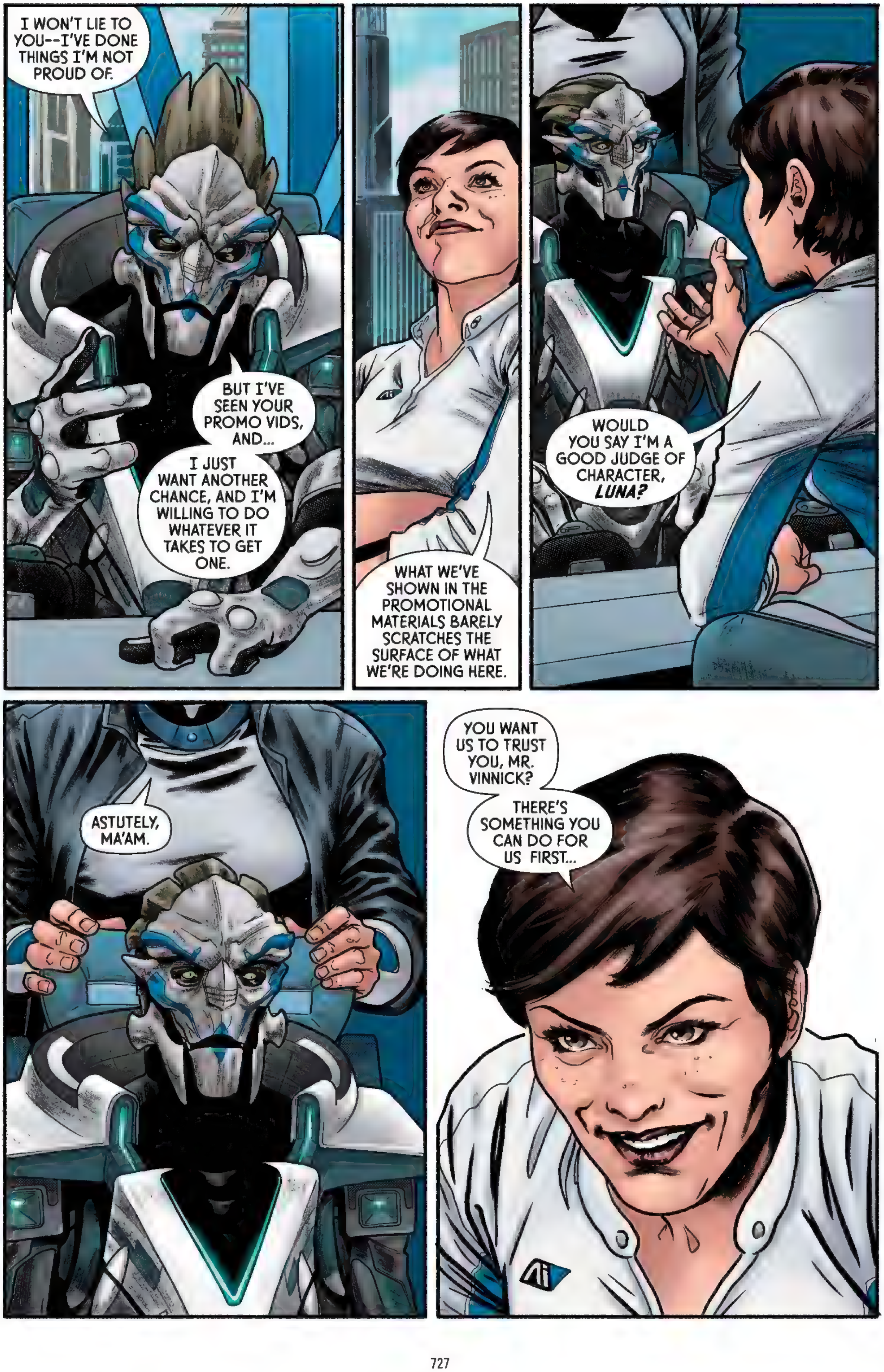

"THE SHORTEST DISTANCE BETWEEN TWO POINTS IS A STRAIGHT LINE.
"IF THE ANDROMEDA INITIATIVE WAS A THREAT, I WAS GOING TO STRANGLE IT AT ITS SOURCE.
"EARTH.
CAUTION
"I HAD TO ADMIT, THOUGH-- THE SCENERY WAS NICER THAN I ANTICIPATED.
"COULDN'T IMAGINE MANY OTHER TURIANS HAD SET FOOT ON THE PLANET.
"IT'S A GOOD THING I WASN'T THERE TO BLEND IN."
WHO DIED AND PUT *YOU* IN CHARGE, THEN?!

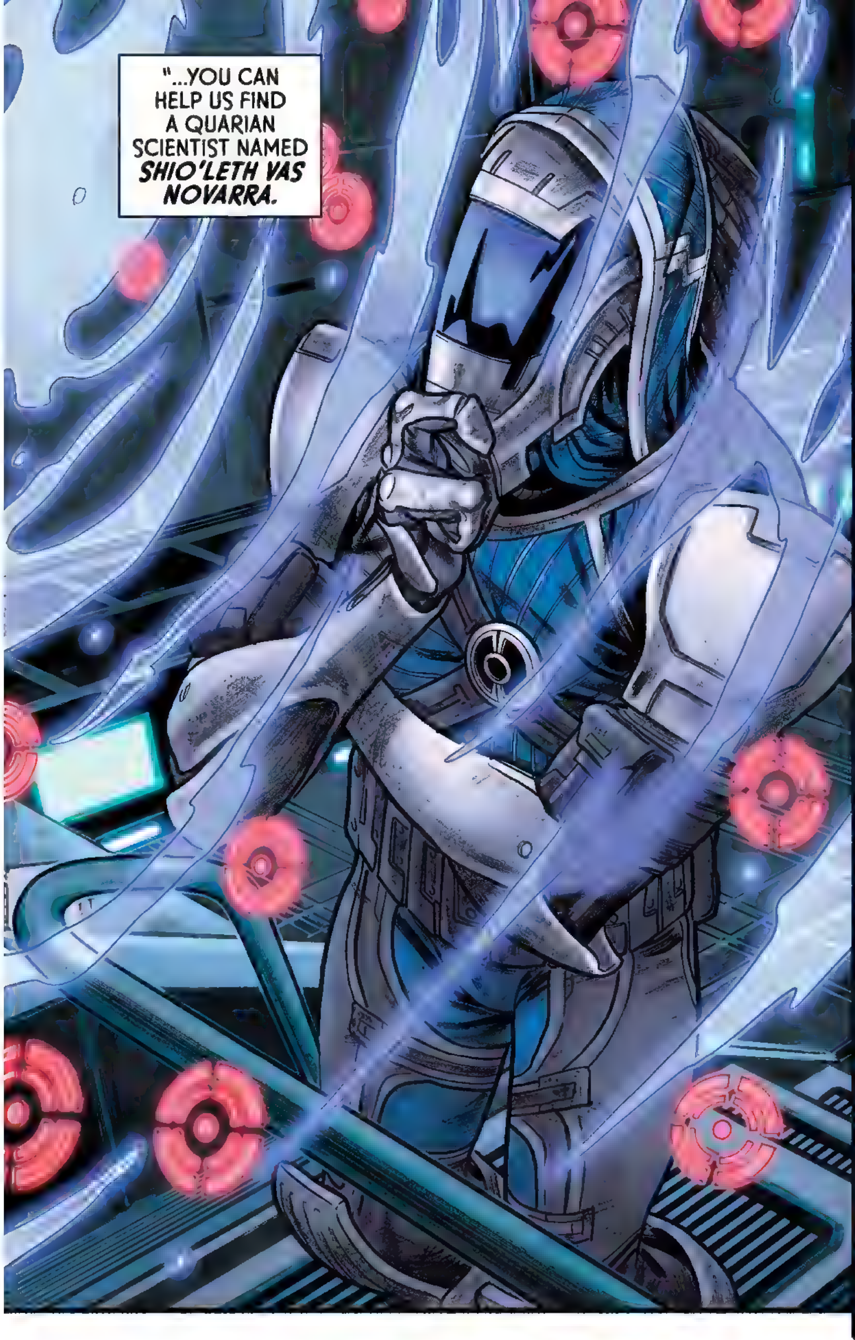

"WE NEEDED A DIVERSION--SOMETHING TO GRAB THE INITIATIVE'S ATTENTION."
WHO SAYS WHO GOES AND WHO GETS LEFT BEHIND?!
WE HAVE AS MUCH RIGHT AS ANYONE TO HAVE A SEAT ON YOUR DAMNED SHIPS!
THE INITIATIVE IS RIGGED!
Free Travel for Everyone
"PAID OFF SOME AGITATORS TO RAISE HELL ON THEIR DOORSTEP."
INITI IS RIGG
VEL OR ONE
ARE YOU KIDDING ME?!
"STOKED SOME RESENTMENTS AND ANTI-INITIATIVE ATTITUDES."
NOW THEY'RE LETTING *ALIENS* CUT AHEAD OF US?!
DIAL IT DOWN, MAN. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS.
Free Travel for all!
KRAK
NO-- BUT YOU'RE *HERE*.
"STRUCK THE MATCH."
GO BACK TO *YOUR OWN* PLANET!
"WATCHED IT BURN.

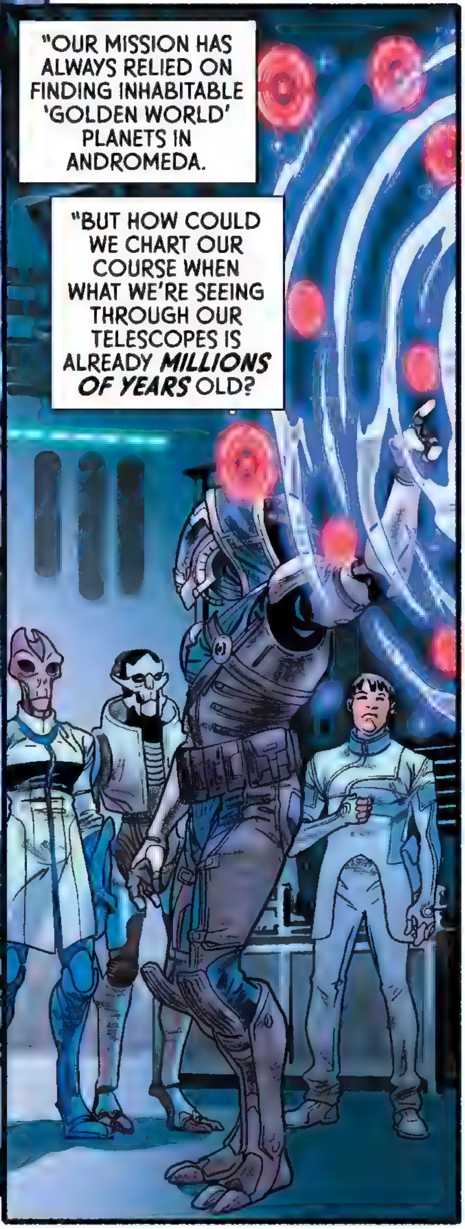

"THEN WAITED FOR SOMEONE TO COME STAMP THE FIRE OUT."
HEY! WHAT THE S#@% IS THIS?!
YOU'RE ALL TRESPASSING HERE.
I'M SUPPOSED TO CALL THE POLICE, BUT...MAYBE I'LL CALL AN *AMBULANCE* INSTEAD.
FREE TRAVEL FOR EVERYONE!!
I'LL TAKE YOU UP ON THAT.
YOU'RE A LONG WAY FROM *PALAVEN,* BIRD MAN.
YOU LOST?

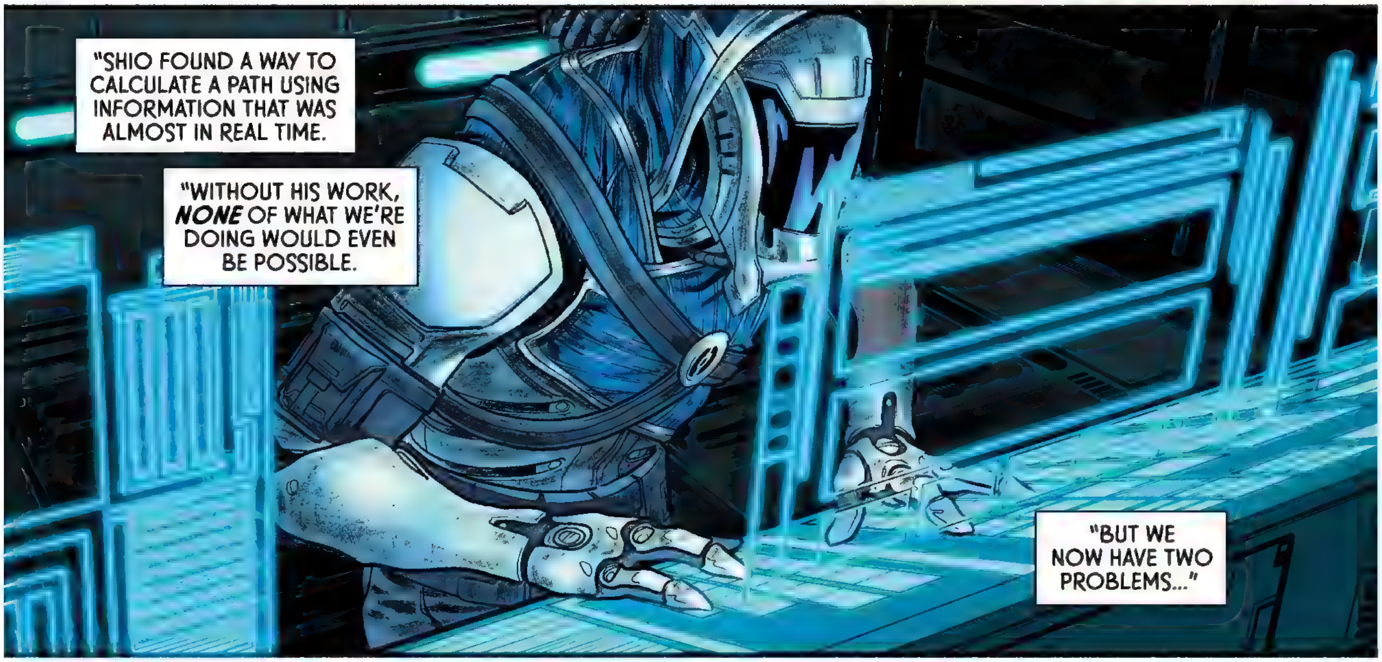

I'M LOOKING FOR A JOB.
GO GET ON THE WAIT LIST, THEN.
I TRIED. THEY MADE IT CLEAR THERE'S NO ROOM IN YOUR PROGRAM FOR SOMEONE WHO'S...
...FOR PEOPLE WHO HAVE CERTAIN BACKGROUNDS.
I'M EX-MILITARY. I WAS TOLD MY... SKILL SET MIGHT BE ***APPRECIATED*** HERE.
YOU WERE TOLD WRONG. NOW BEAT IT.
MS. SHANKS?
MA'AM?
I WANT TO HEAR WHAT HE HAS TO SAY.

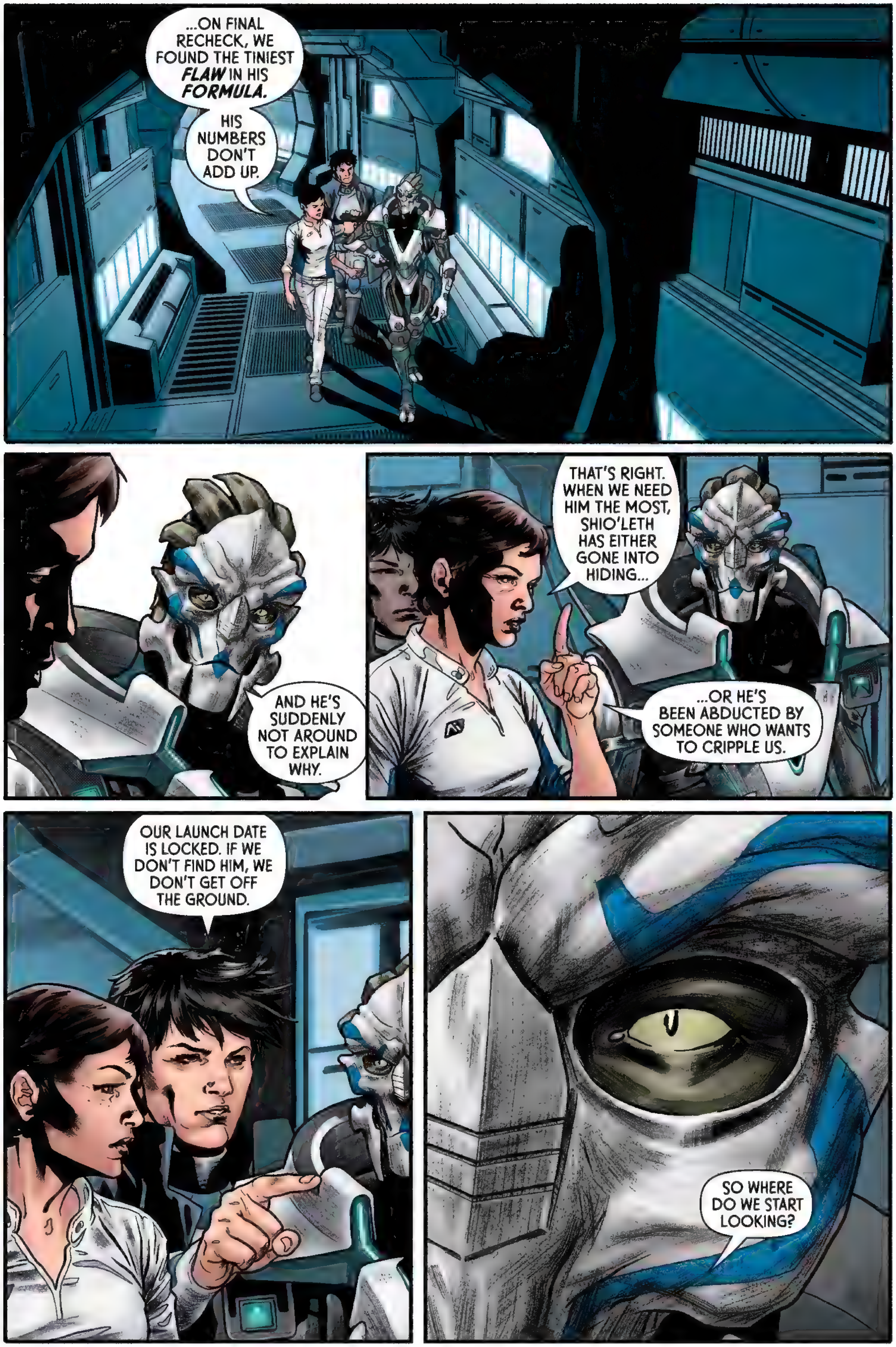

SHANKS, WAS IT?
MY NAME'S VINNICK. SANJIN VINNICK.
NOT INTERESTED.
YOU'RE BEING RUDE, LUNA.
IT'S NOT A WELL-KEPT SECRET, BUT MS. SHANKS HEADS MY PRIVATE SECURITY DETAIL.
I'M MORE INTERESTED IN YOU, THOUGH, MR. VINNICK...
...I JUST REVIEWED YOUR FILE. THERE'S A LOT TO TALK ABOUT.
YOU PULLED MY FILE WHILE I WAS IN THE ELEVATOR?
WE AREN'T WANTING FOR MANY THINGS HERE, BUT TIME IS NOT ONE OF OUR LUXURIES.
I'M JIEN GARSON-- FOUNDER OF THE ANDROMEDA INITIATIVE.
I KNOW WHO YOU ARE. THIS ISN'T WHAT I EXPECTED.
I FIND IT'S BEST TO GET RIGHT TO THE POINT, DON'T YOU?
PLEASE.
SO. DISHONORABLY DISCHARGED FROM THE TURIAN MILITARY. A PRISON SENTENCE FOR DOMESTIC ASSAULT...
...NOT EXACTLY THE "SKILL SET" I'D SAY WE'RE LOOKING FOR HERE.

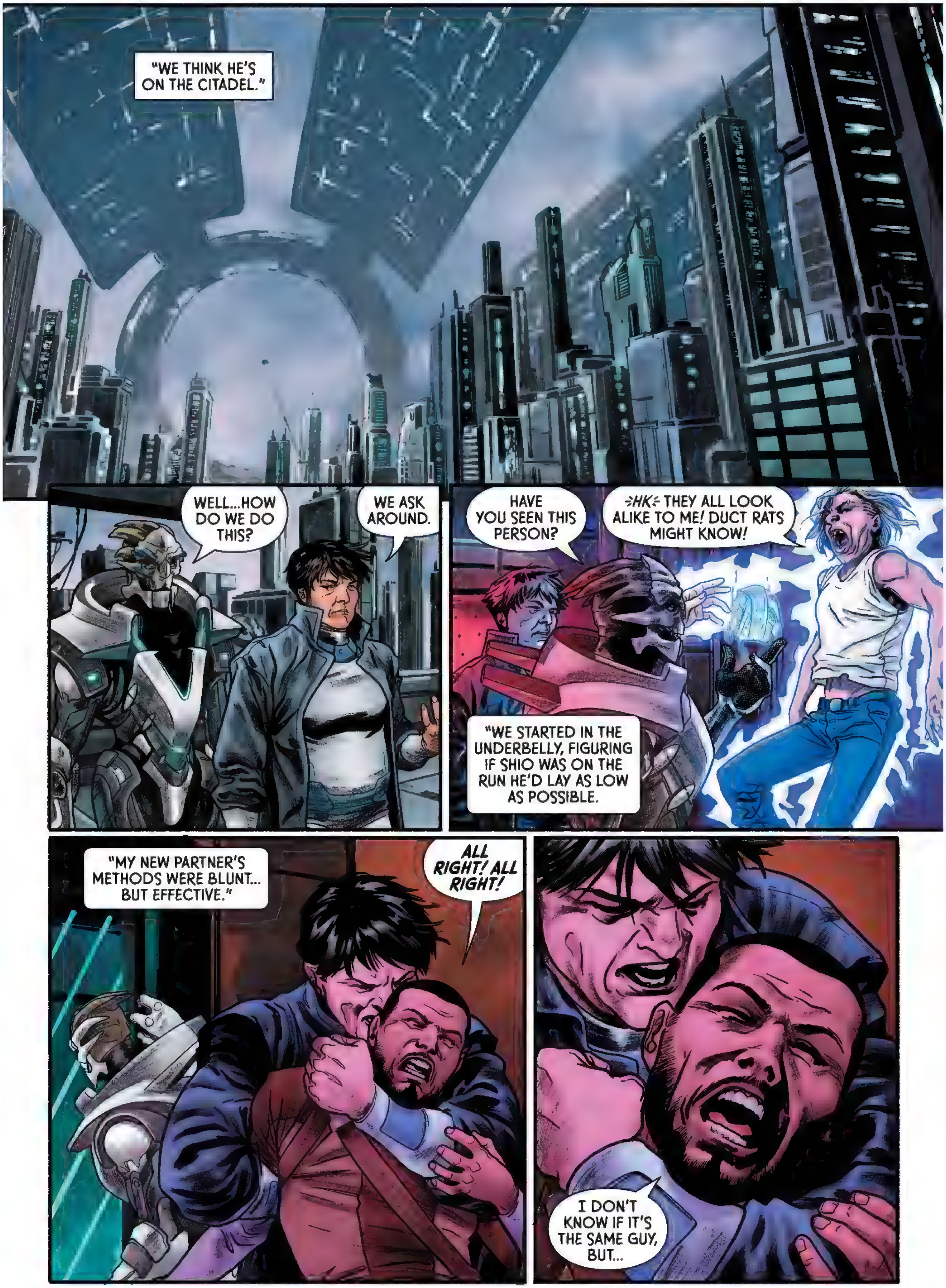

I WON'T LIE TO YOU--I'VE DONE THINGS I'M NOT PROUD OF.
BUT I'VE SEEN YOUR PROMO VIDS, AND...
I JUST WANT ANOTHER CHANCE, AND I'M WILLING TO DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO GET ONE.
WHAT WE'VE SHOWN IN THE PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS BARELY SCRATCHES THE SURFACE OF WHAT WE'RE DOING HERE.
WOULD YOU SAY I'M A GOOD JUDGE OF CHARACTER, ***LUNA?***
ASTUTELY, MA'AM.
YOU WANT US TO TRUST YOU, MR. VINNICK?
THERE'S SOMETHING YOU CAN DO FOR US FIRST...

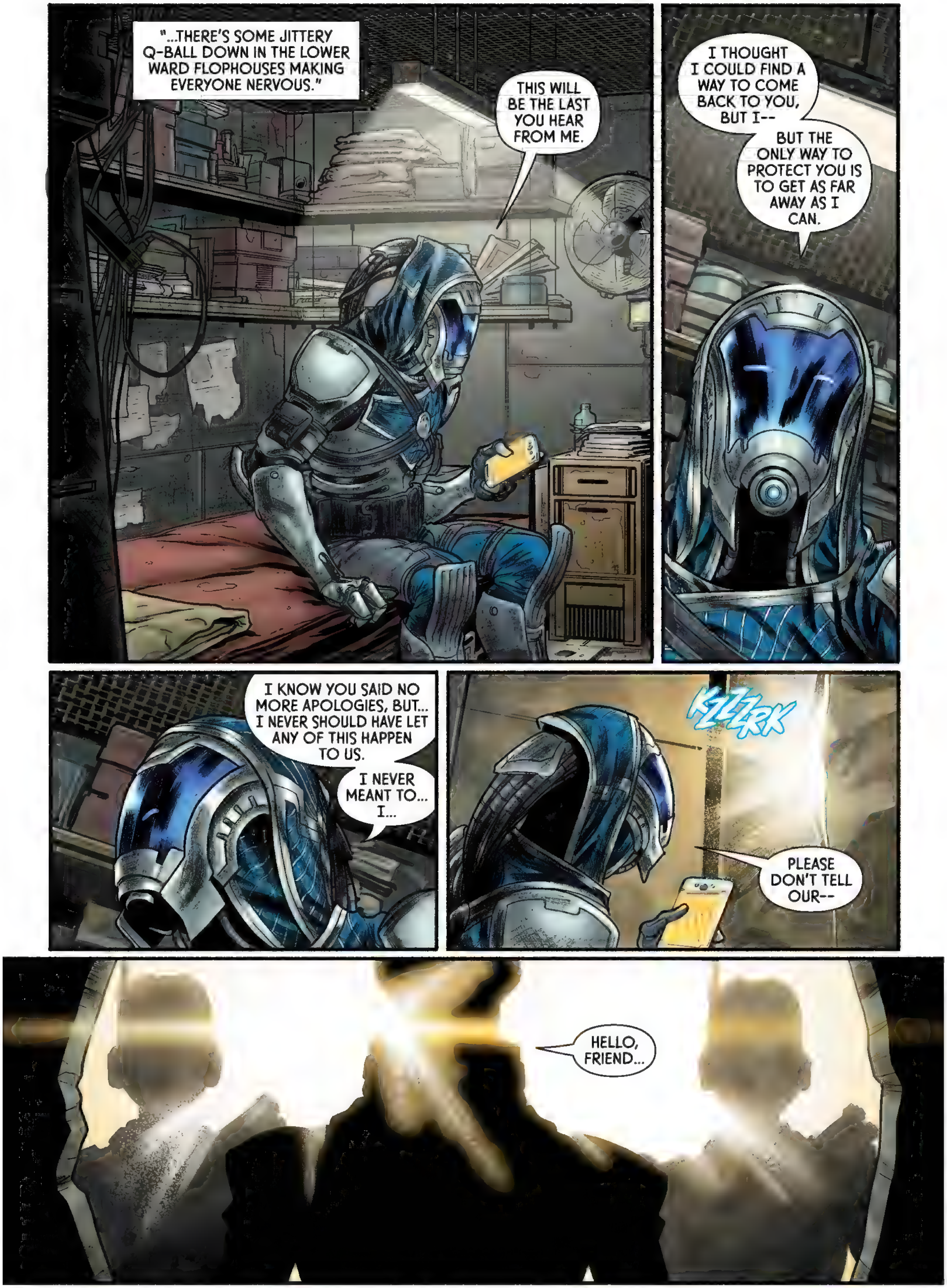

"...YOU CAN HELP US FIND A QUARIAN SCIENTIST NAMED ***SHIO'LETH VAS NOVARRA.***

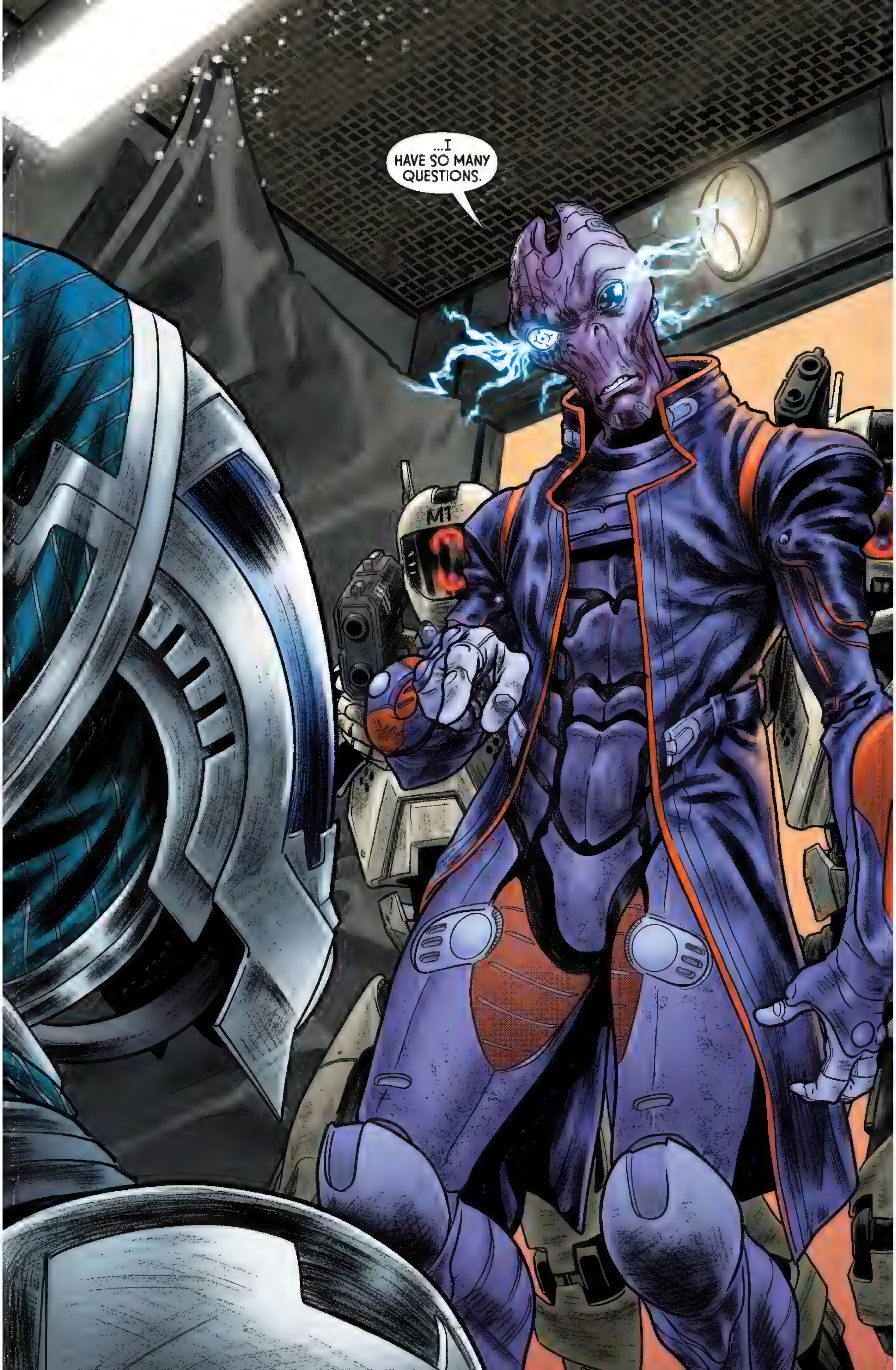

"OUR MISSION HAS ALWAYS RELIED ON FINDING INHABITABLE 'GOLDEN WORLD' PLANETS IN ANDROMEDA.
"BUT HOW COULD WE CHART OUR COURSE WHEN WHAT WE'RE SEEING THROUGH OUR TELESCOPES IS ALREADY ***MILLIONS OF YEARS*** OLD?

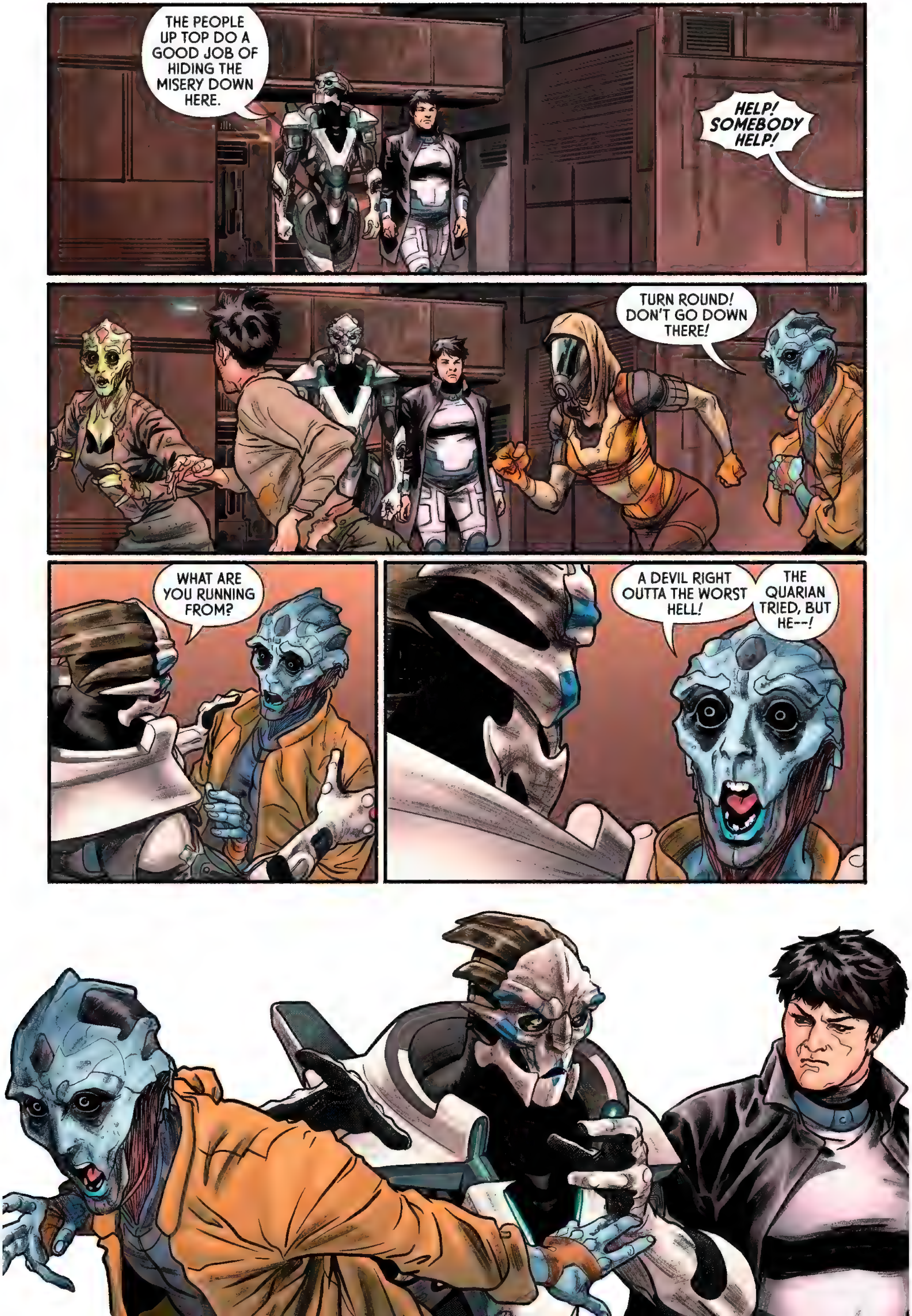

"SHIO FOUND A WAY TO CALCULATE A PATH USING INFORMATION THAT WAS ALMOST IN REAL TIME.
"WITHOUT HIS WORK, ***NONE*** OF WHAT WE'RE DOING WOULD EVEN BE POSSIBLE.
"BUT WE NOW HAVE TWO PROBLEMS..."

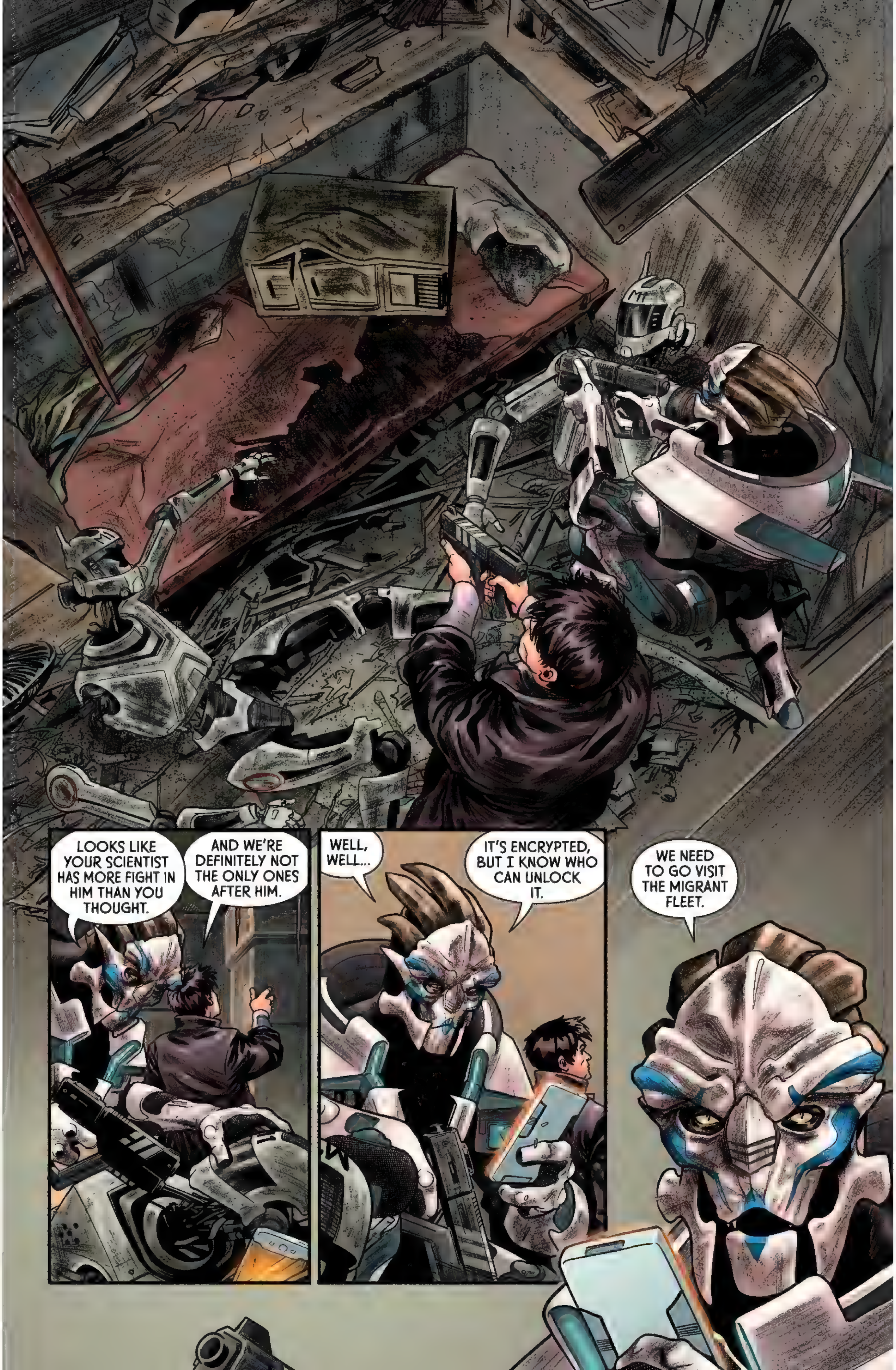

...ON FINAL RECHECK, WE FOUND THE TINIEST *FLAW* IN HIS *FORMULA*.
HIS NUMBERS DON'T ADD UP.
AND HE'S SUDDENLY NOT AROUND TO EXPLAIN WHY.
THAT'S RIGHT. WHEN WE NEED HIM THE MOST, SHIO'LETH HAS EITHER GONE INTO HIDING...
...OR HE'S BEEN ABDUCTED BY SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO CRIPPLE US.
OUR LAUNCH DATE IS LOCKED. IF WE DON'T FIND HIM, WE DON'T GET OFF THE GROUND.
SO WHERE DO WE START LOOKING?

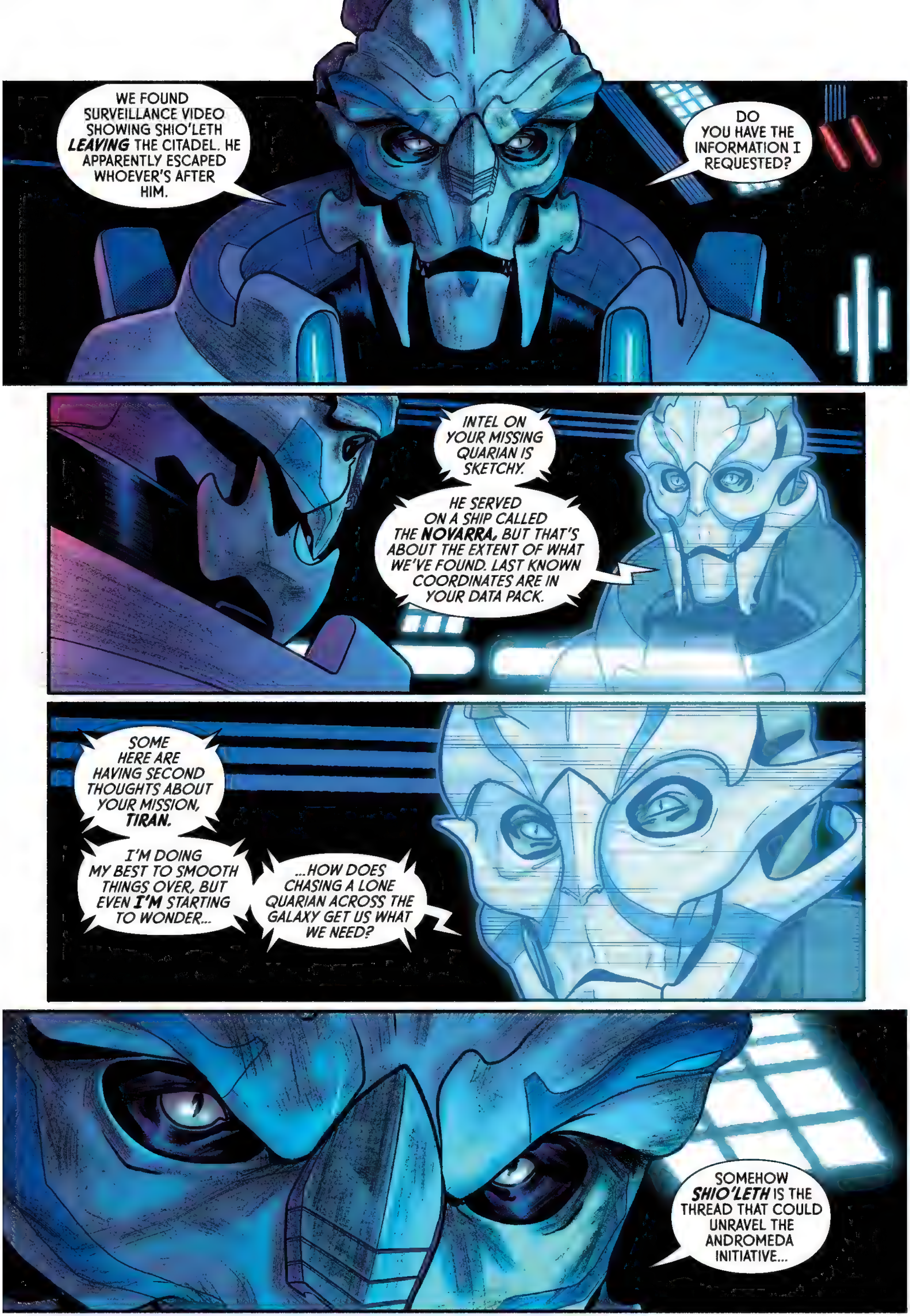

"WE THINK HE'S ON THE CITADEL."
WELL...HOW DO WE DO THIS?
WE ASK AROUND.
HAVE YOU SEEN THIS PERSON?
=HK= THEY ALL LOOK ALIKE TO ME! DUCT RATS MIGHT KNOW!
"WE STARTED IN THE UNDERBELLY, FIGURING IF SHIO WAS ON THE RUN HE'D LAY AS LOW AS POSSIBLE.
"MY NEW PARTNER'S METHODS WERE BLUNT... BUT EFFECTIVE."
ALL RIGHT! ALL RIGHT!
I DON'T KNOW IF IT'S THE SAME GUY, BUT...

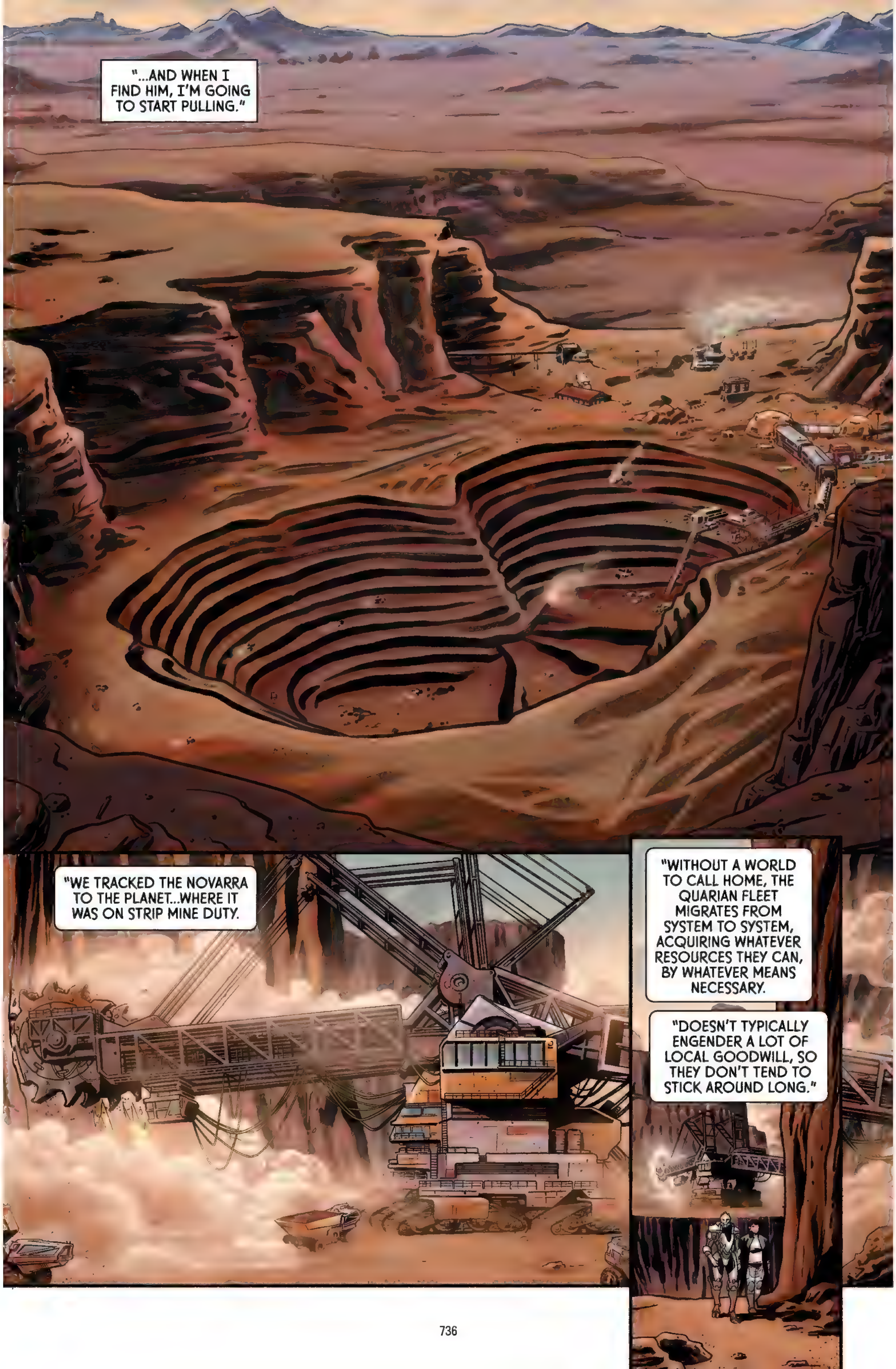

"...THERE'S SOME JITTERY Q-BALL DOWN IN THE LOWER WARD FLOPHOUSES MAKING EVERYONE NERVOUS."
THIS WILL BE THE LAST YOU HEAR FROM ME.
I THOUGHT I COULD FIND A WAY TO COME BACK TO YOU, BUT I--
BUT THE ONLY WAY TO PROTECT YOU IS TO GET AS FAR AWAY AS I CAN.
I KNOW YOU SAID NO MORE APOLOGIES, BUT... I NEVER SHOULD HAVE LET ANY OF THIS HAPPEN TO US.
I NEVER MEANT TO... I...
KZZZRK
PLEASE DON'T TELL OUR--
HELLO, FRIEND...

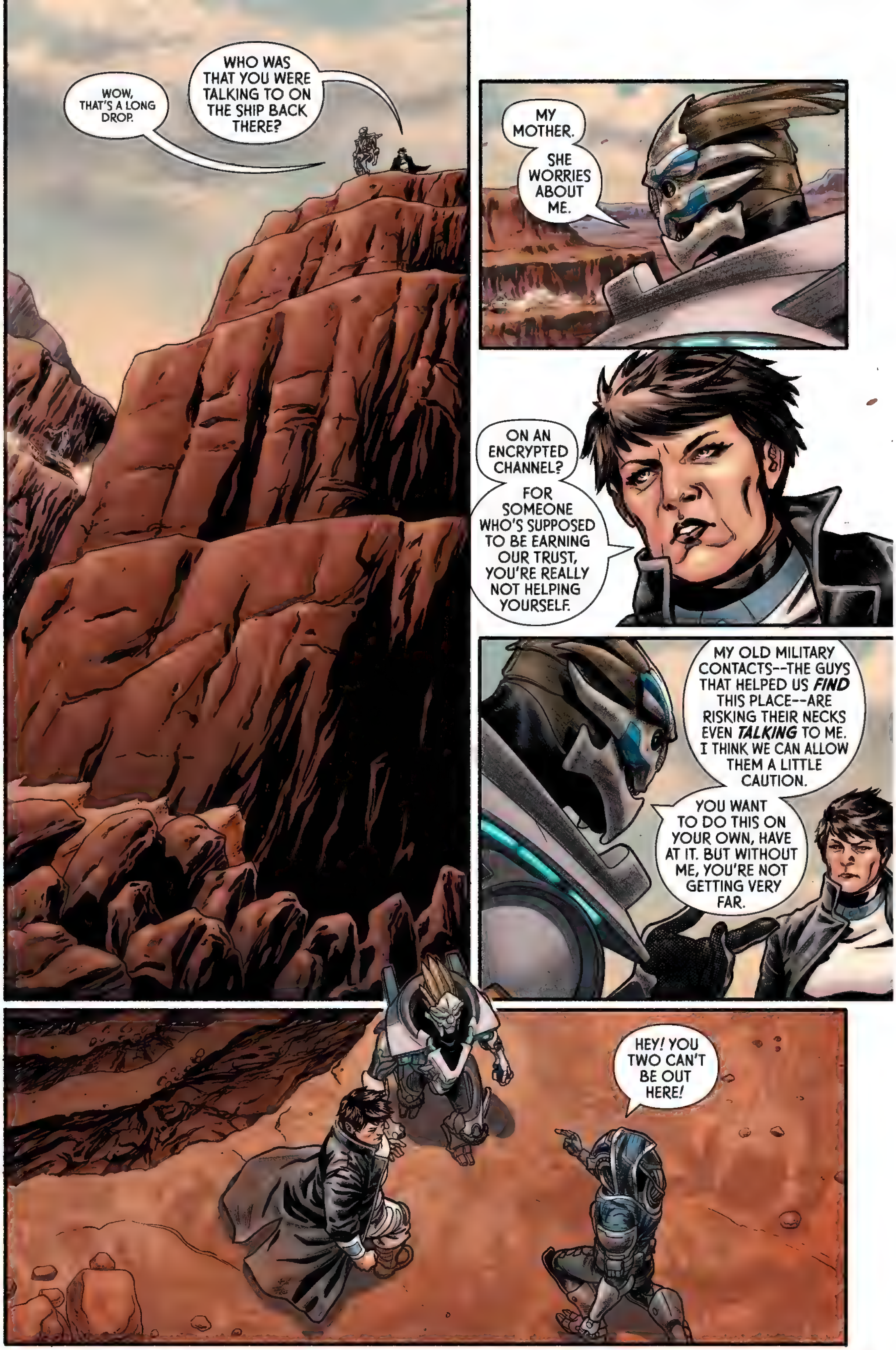

...I HAVE SO MANY QUESTIONS.
M1

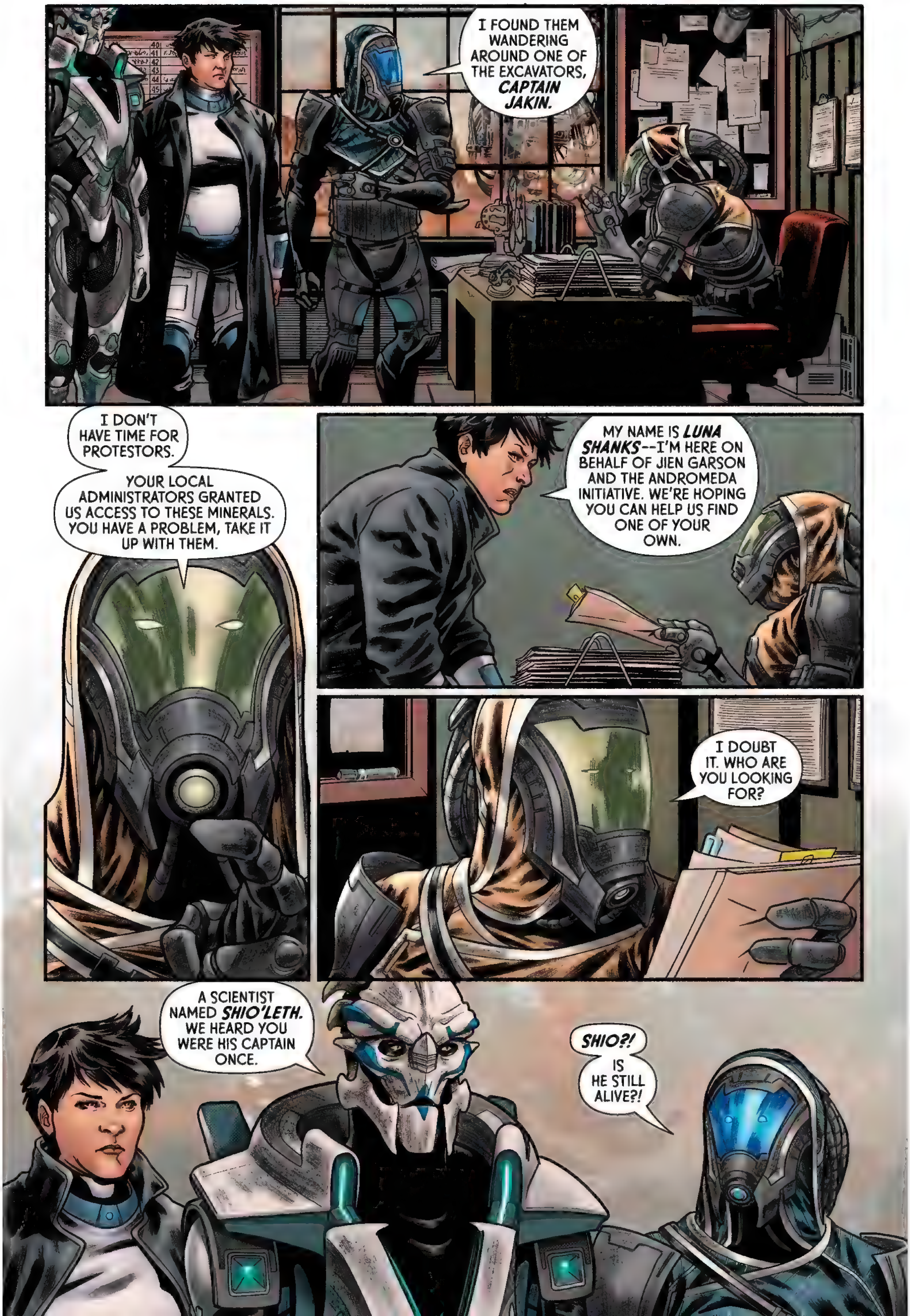

THE PEOPLE UP TOP DO A GOOD JOB OF HIDING THE MISERY DOWN HERE.
HELP! SOMEBODY HELP!
TURN ROUND! DON'T GO DOWN THERE!
WHAT ARE YOU RUNNING FROM?
A DEVIL RIGHT OUTTA THE WORST HELL!
THE QUARIAN TRIED, BUT HE--!

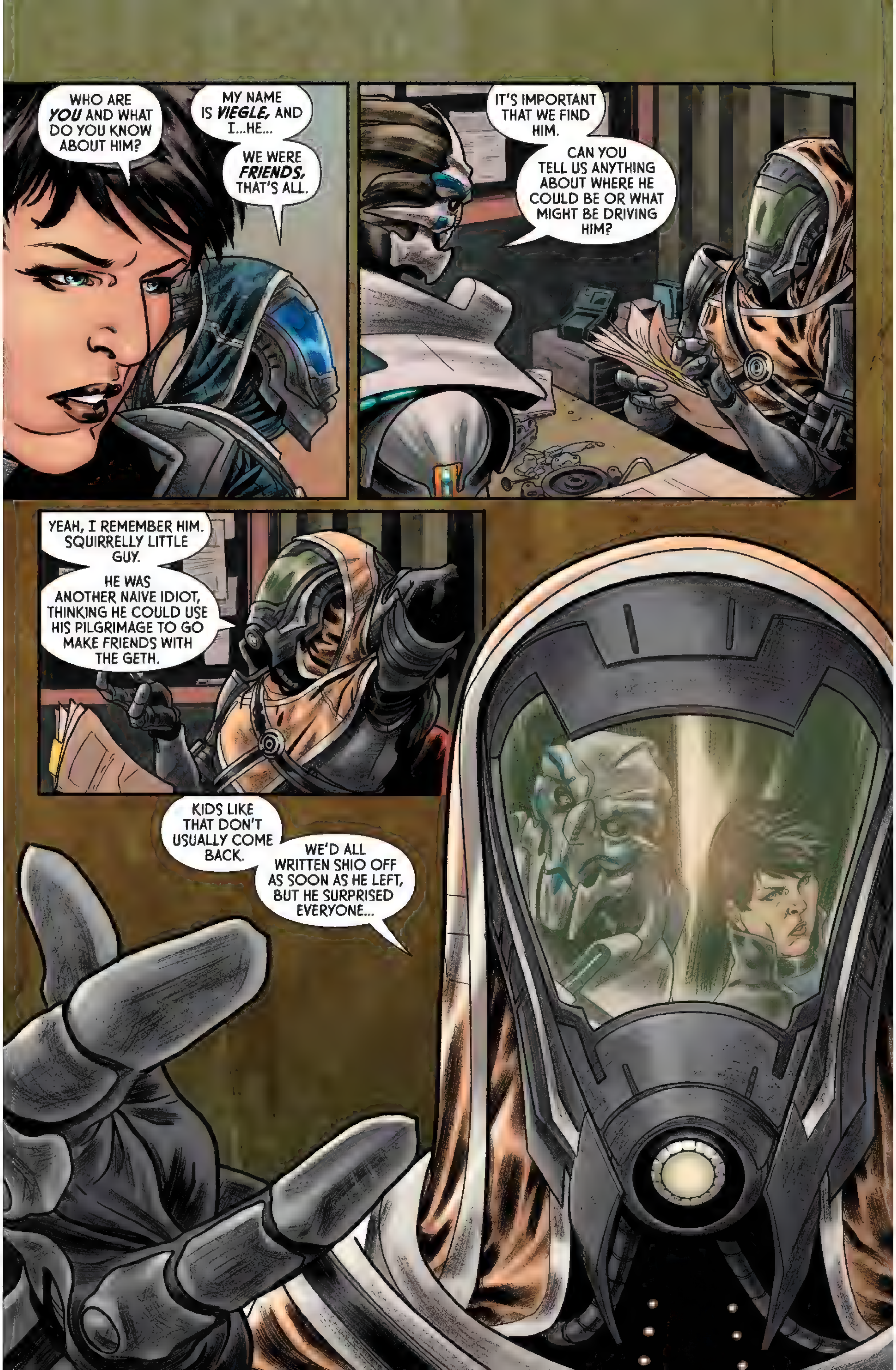

LOOKS LIKE YOUR SCIENTIST HAS MORE FIGHT IN HIM THAN YOU THOUGHT.
AND WE'RE DEFINITELY NOT THE ONLY ONES AFTER HIM.
WELL, WELL...
IT'S ENCRYPTED, BUT I KNOW WHO CAN UNLOCK IT.
WE NEED TO GO VISIT THE MIGRANT FLEET.

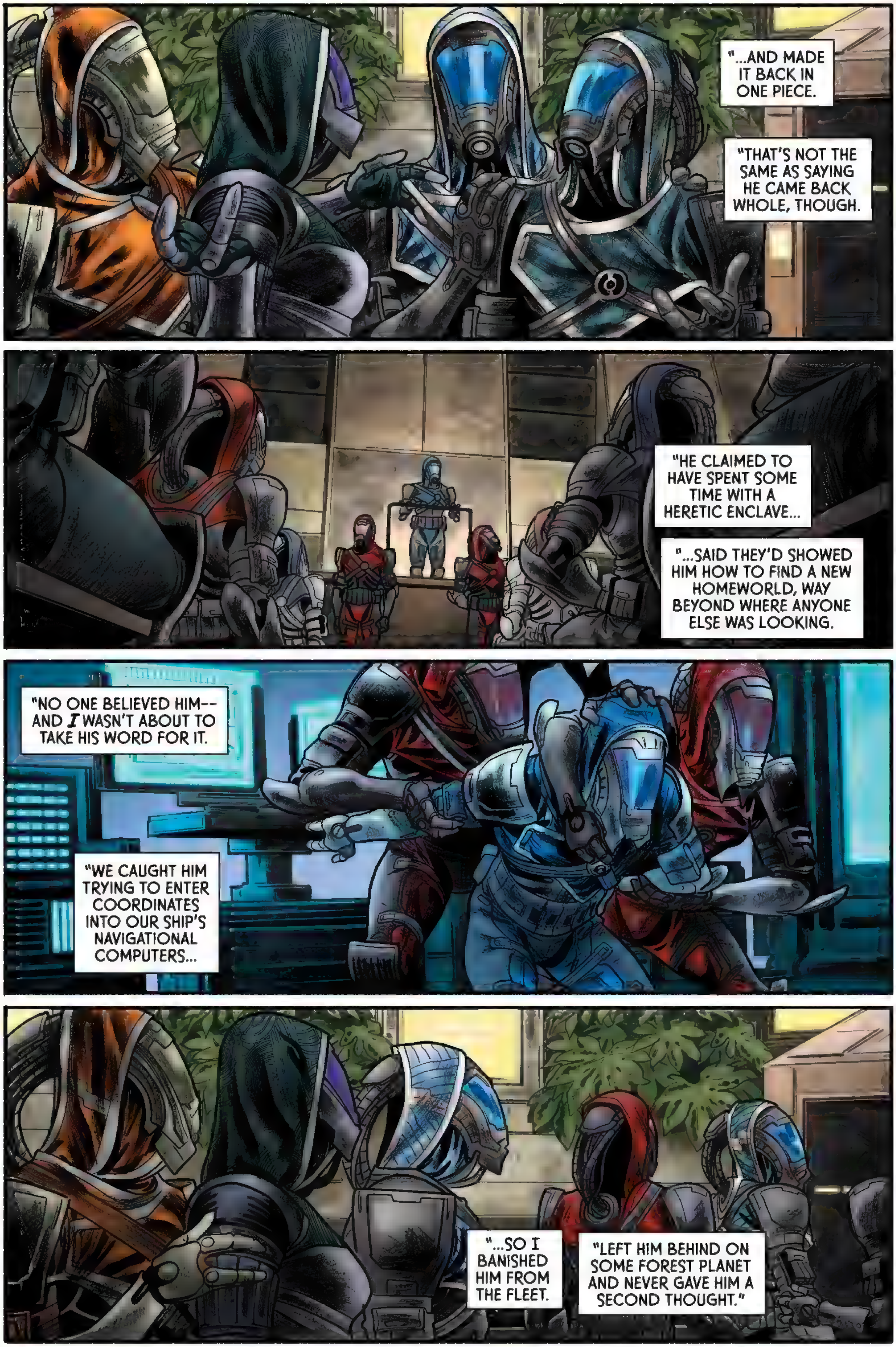

WE FOUND SURVEILLANCE VIDEO SHOWING SHIO'LETH *LEAVING* THE CITADEL. HE APPARENTLY ESCAPED WHOEVER'S AFTER HIM.
DO YOU HAVE THE INFORMATION I REQUESTED?
INTEL ON YOUR MISSING QUARIAN IS SKETCHY.
*HE SERVED ON A SHIP CALLED THE **NOVARRA,** BUT THAT'S ABOUT THE EXTENT OF WHAT WE'VE FOUND. LAST KNOWN COORDINATES ARE IN YOUR DATA PACK.*
*SOME HERE ARE HAVING SECOND THOUGHTS ABOUT YOUR MISSION, **TIRAN.***
*I'M DOING MY BEST TO SMOOTH THINGS OVER, BUT EVEN **I'M** STARTING TO WONDER...*
...HOW DOES CHASING A LONE QUARIAN ACROSS THE GALAXY GET US WHAT WE NEED?
SOMEHOW ***SHIO'LETH*** IS THE THREAD THAT COULD UNRAVEL THE ANDROMEDA INITIATIVE...

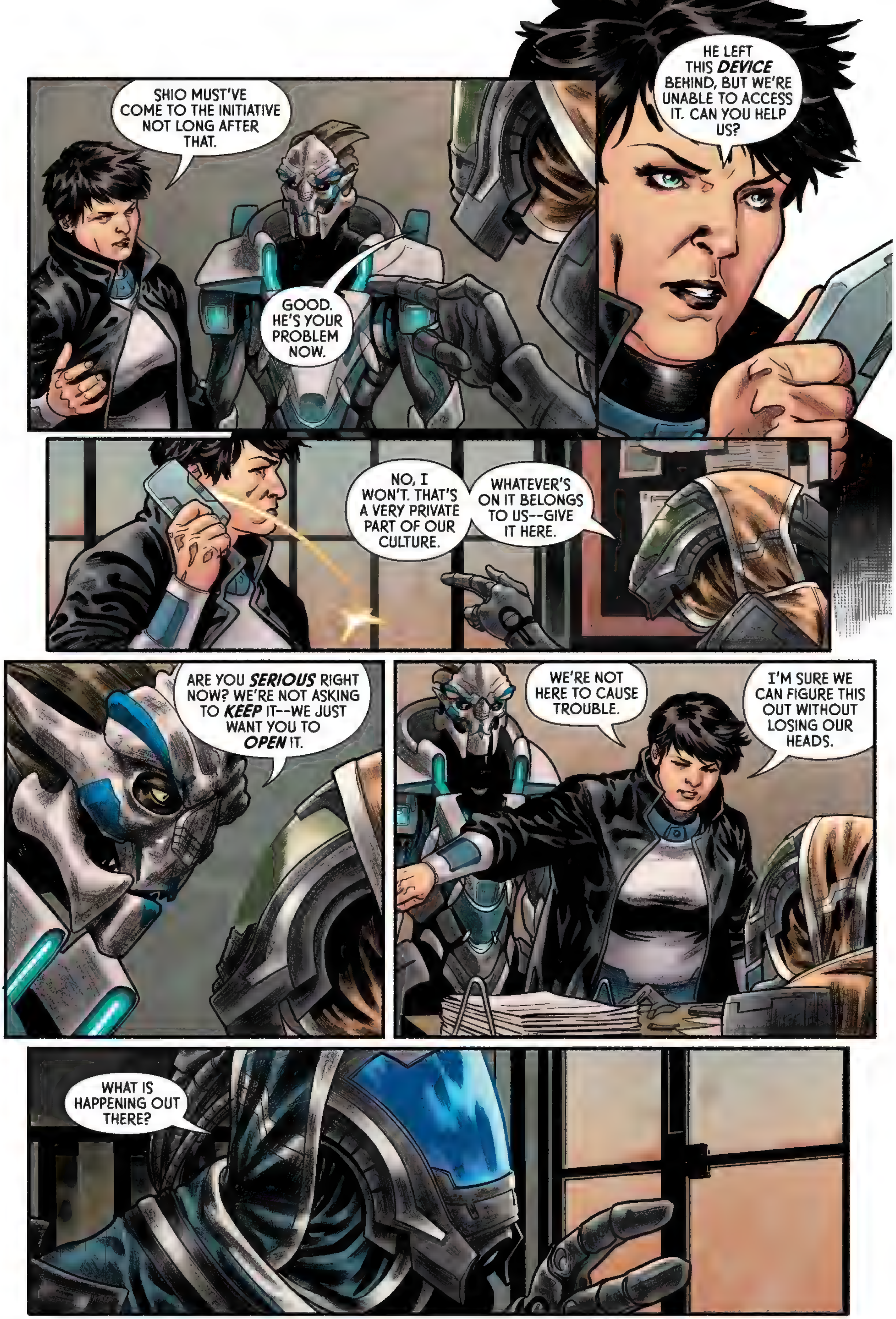

"...AND WHEN I FIND HIM, I'M GOING TO START PULLING."
"WE TRACKED THE NOVARRA TO THE PLANET...WHERE IT WAS ON STRIP MINE DUTY.
"WITHOUT A WORLD TO CALL HOME, THE QUARIAN FLEET MIGRATES FROM SYSTEM TO SYSTEM, ACQUIRING WHATEVER RESOURCES THEY CAN, BY WHATEVER MEANS NECESSARY.
"DOESN'T TYPICALLY ENGENDER A LOT OF LOCAL GOODWILL, SO THEY DON'T TEND TO STICK AROUND LONG."

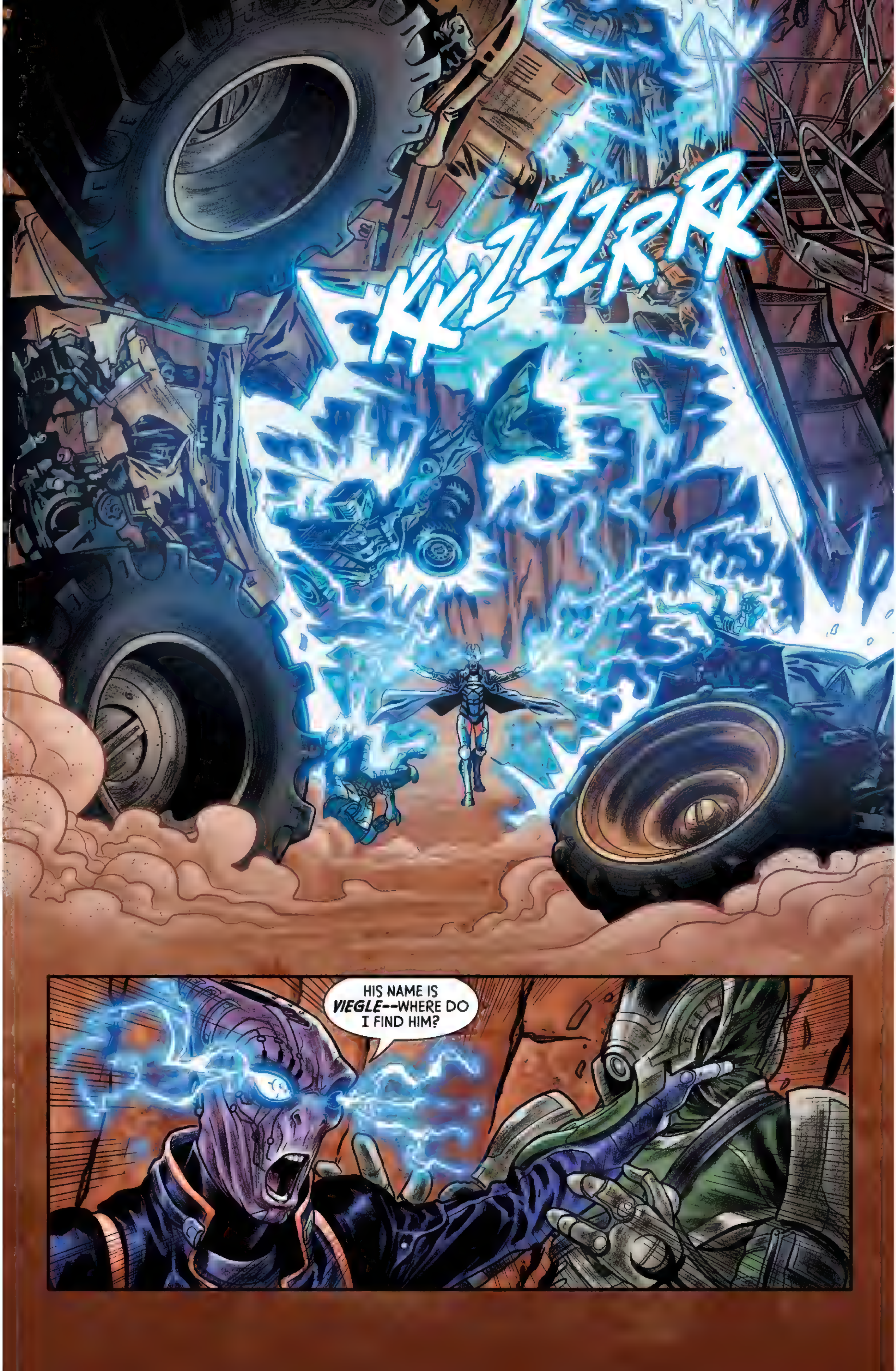

WOW, THAT'S A LONG DROP.
WHO WAS THAT YOU WERE TALKING TO ON THE SHIP BACK THERE?
MY MOTHER.
SHE WORRIES ABOUT ME.
ON AN ENCRYPTED CHANNEL?
FOR SOMEONE WHO'S SUPPOSED TO BE EARNING OUR TRUST, YOU'RE REALLY NOT HELPING YOURSELF.
MY OLD MILITARY CONTACTS--THE GUYS THAT HELPED US *FIND* THIS PLACE--ARE RISKING THEIR NECKS EVEN *TALKING* TO ME. I THINK WE CAN ALLOW THEM A LITTLE CAUTION.
YOU WANT TO DO THIS ON YOUR OWN, HAVE AT IT. BUT WITHOUT ME, YOU'RE NOT GETTING VERY FAR.
HEY! YOU TWO CAN'T BE OUT HERE!

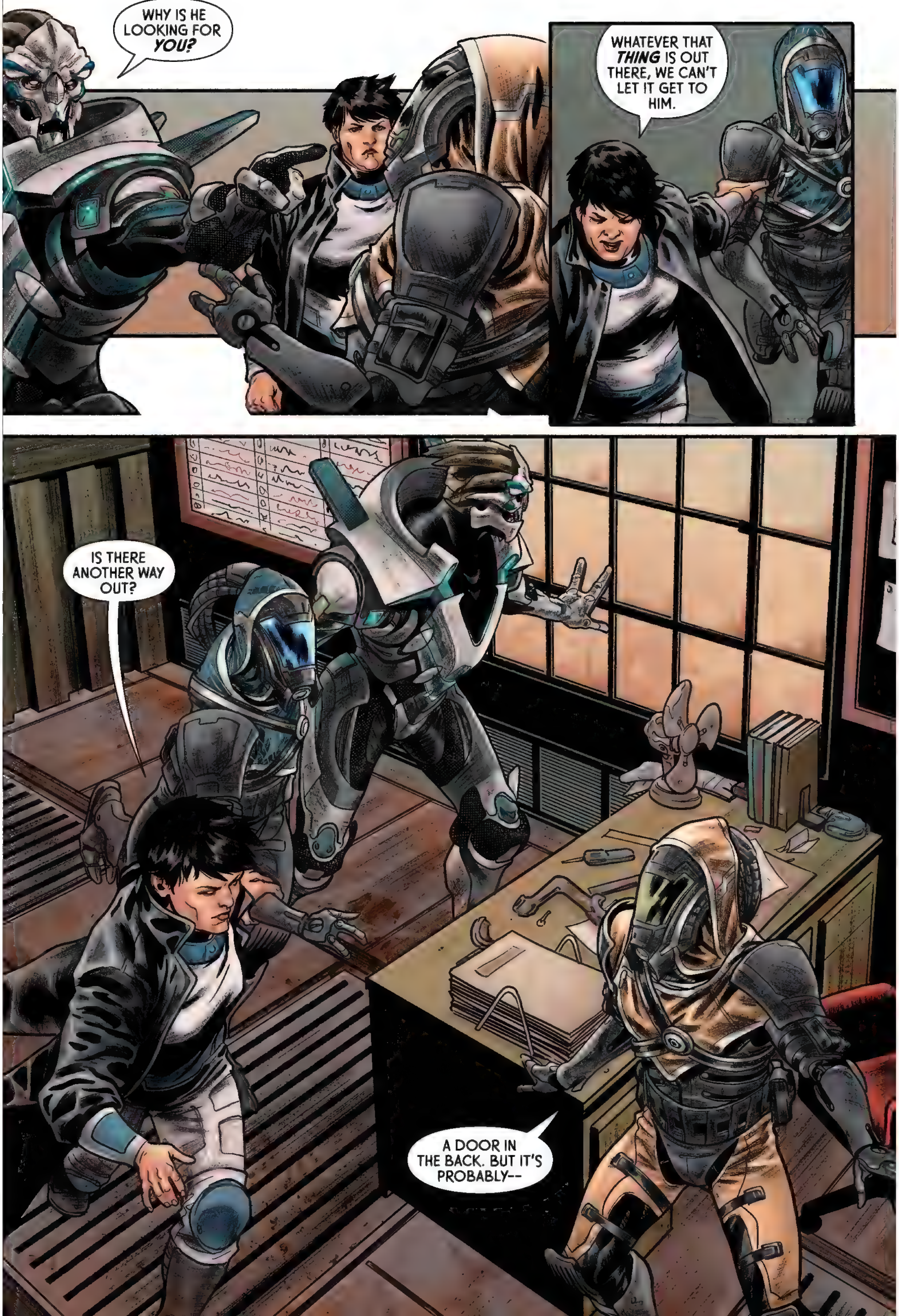

I FOUND THEM WANDERING AROUND ONE OF THE EXCAVATORS, ***CAPTAIN JAKIN.***
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR PROTESTORS.
YOUR LOCAL ADMINISTRATORS GRANTED US ACCESS TO THESE MINERALS. YOU HAVE A PROBLEM, TAKE IT UP WITH THEM.
MY NAME IS ***LUNA SHANKS***--I'M HERE ON BEHALF OF JIEN GARSON AND THE ANDROMEDA INITIATIVE. WE'RE HOPING YOU CAN HELP US FIND ONE OF YOUR OWN.
I DOUBT IT. WHO ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?
A SCIENTIST NAMED ***SHIO'LETH.*** WE HEARD YOU WERE HIS CAPTAIN ONCE.
SHIO?!
IS HE STILL ALIVE?!

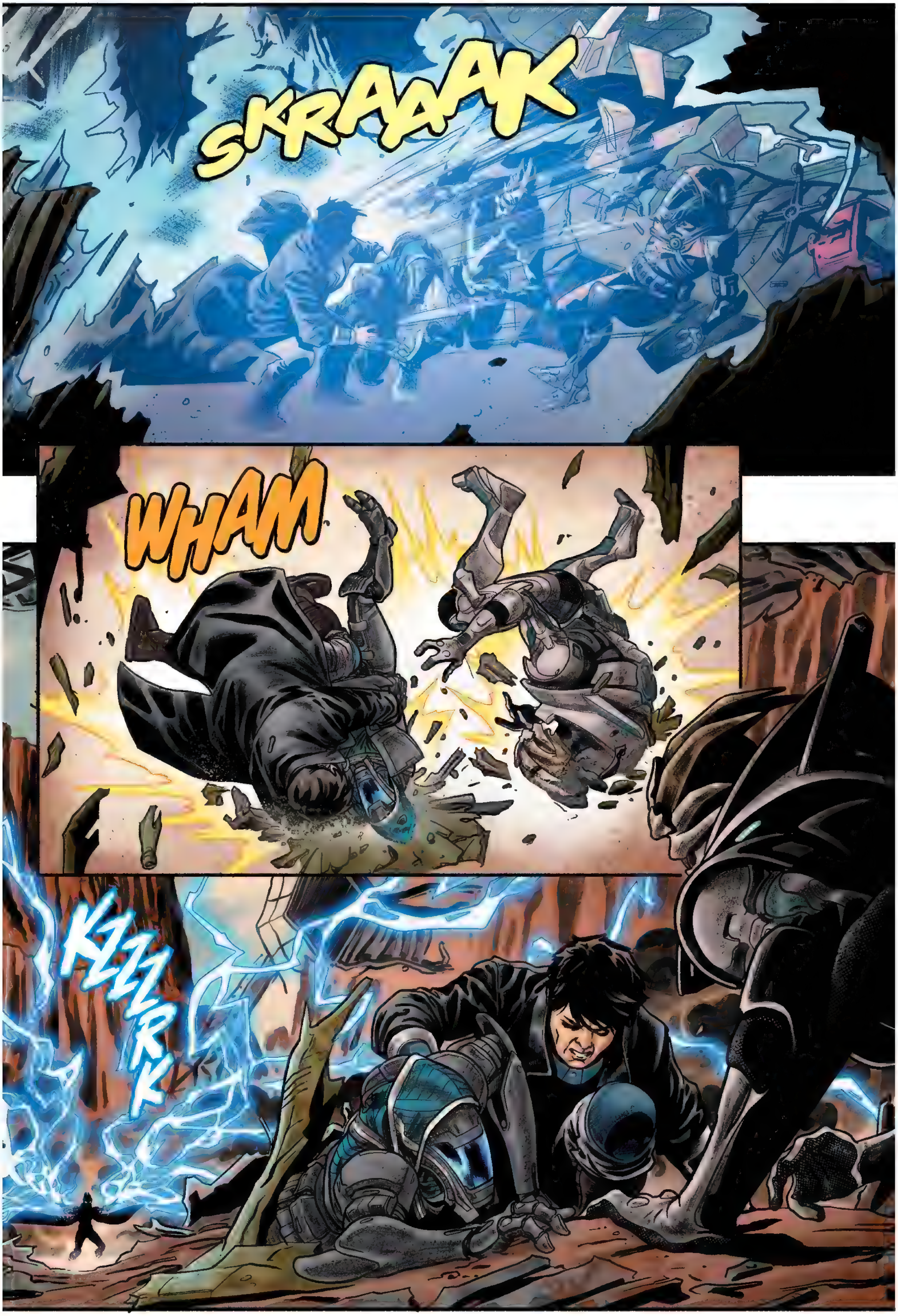

WHO ARE *YOU* AND WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT HIM?
MY NAME IS *VIEGLE,* AND I...HE...
WE WERE *FRIENDS,* THAT'S ALL.
IT'S IMPORTANT THAT WE FIND HIM.
CAN YOU TELL US ANYTHING ABOUT WHERE HE COULD BE OR WHAT MIGHT BE DRIVING HIM?
YEAH, I REMEMBER HIM. SQUIRRELLY LITTLE GUY.
HE WAS ANOTHER NAIVE IDIOT, THINKING HE COULD USE HIS PILGRIMAGE TO GO MAKE FRIENDS WITH THE GETH.
KIDS LIKE THAT DON'T USUALLY COME BACK.
WE'D ALL WRITTEN SHIO OFF AS SOON AS HE LEFT, BUT HE SURPRISED EVERYONE...

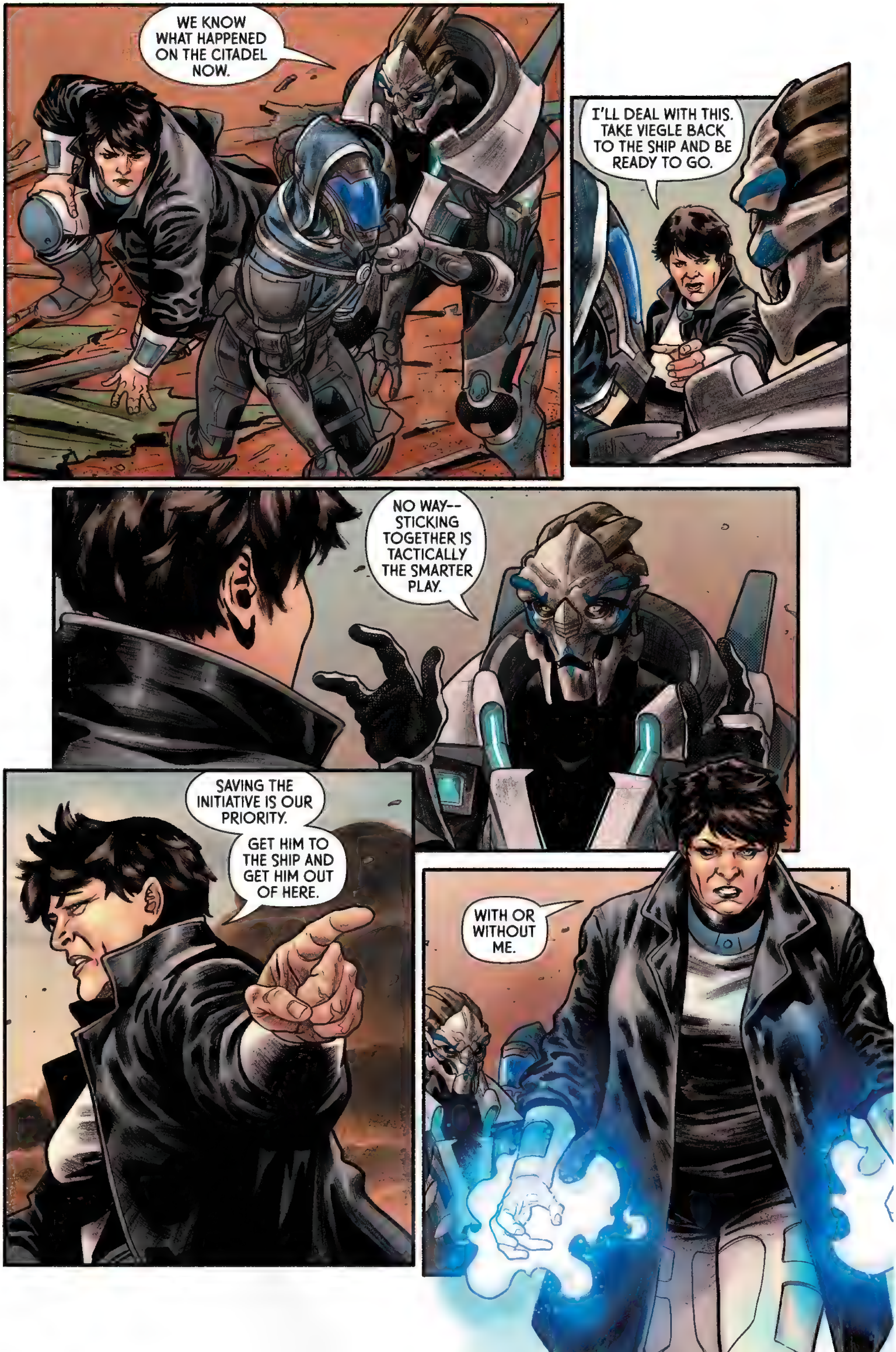

"...AND MADE IT BACK IN ONE PIECE.
"THAT'S NOT THE SAME AS SAYING HE CAME BACK WHOLE, THOUGH.
"HE CLAIMED TO HAVE SPENT SOME TIME WITH A HERETIC ENCLAVE...
"...SAID THEY'D SHOWED HIM HOW TO FIND A NEW HOMEWORLD, WAY BEYOND WHERE ANYONE ELSE WAS LOOKING.
"NO ONE BELIEVED HIM--AND *I* WASN'T ABOUT TO TAKE HIS WORD FOR IT.
"WE CAUGHT HIM TRYING TO ENTER COORDINATES INTO OUR SHIP'S NAVIGATIONAL COMPUTERS...
"...SO I BANISHED HIM FROM THE FLEET.
"LEFT HIM BEHIND ON SOME FOREST PLANET AND NEVER GAVE HIM A SECOND THOUGHT."

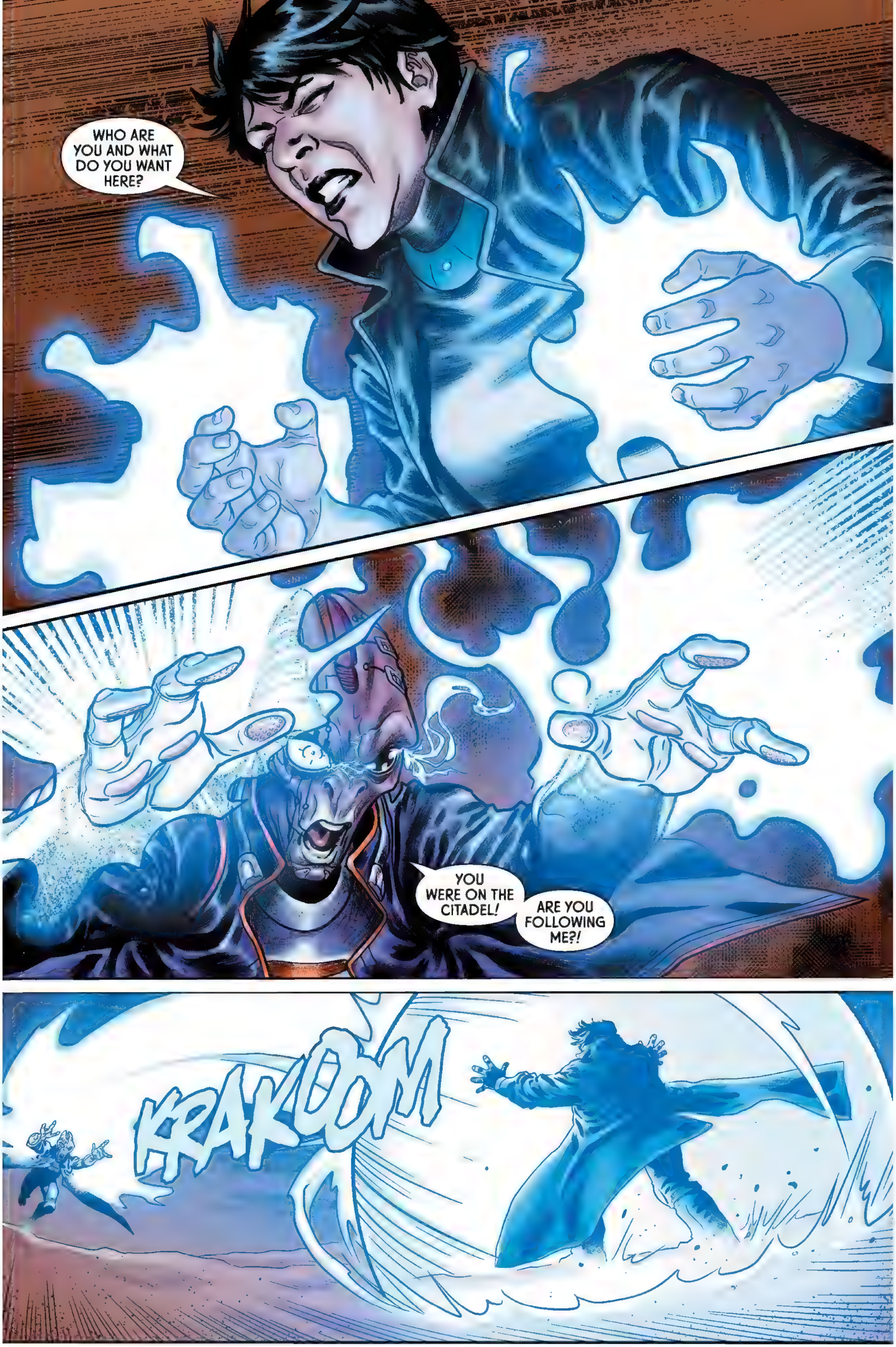

SHIO MUST'VE COME TO THE INITIATIVE NOT LONG AFTER THAT.
GOOD. HE'S YOUR PROBLEM NOW.
HE LEFT THIS DEVICE BEHIND, BUT WE'RE UNABLE TO ACCESS IT. CAN YOU HELP US?
NO, I WON'T. THAT'S A VERY PRIVATE PART OF OUR CULTURE.
WHATEVER'S ON IT BELONGS TO US--GIVE IT HERE.
ARE YOU SERIOUS RIGHT NOW? WE'RE NOT ASKING TO KEEP IT--WE JUST WANT YOU TO OPEN IT.
WE'RE NOT HERE TO CAUSE TROUBLE.
I'M SURE WE CAN FIGURE THIS OUT WITHOUT LOSING OUR HEADS.
WHAT IS HAPPENING OUT THERE?

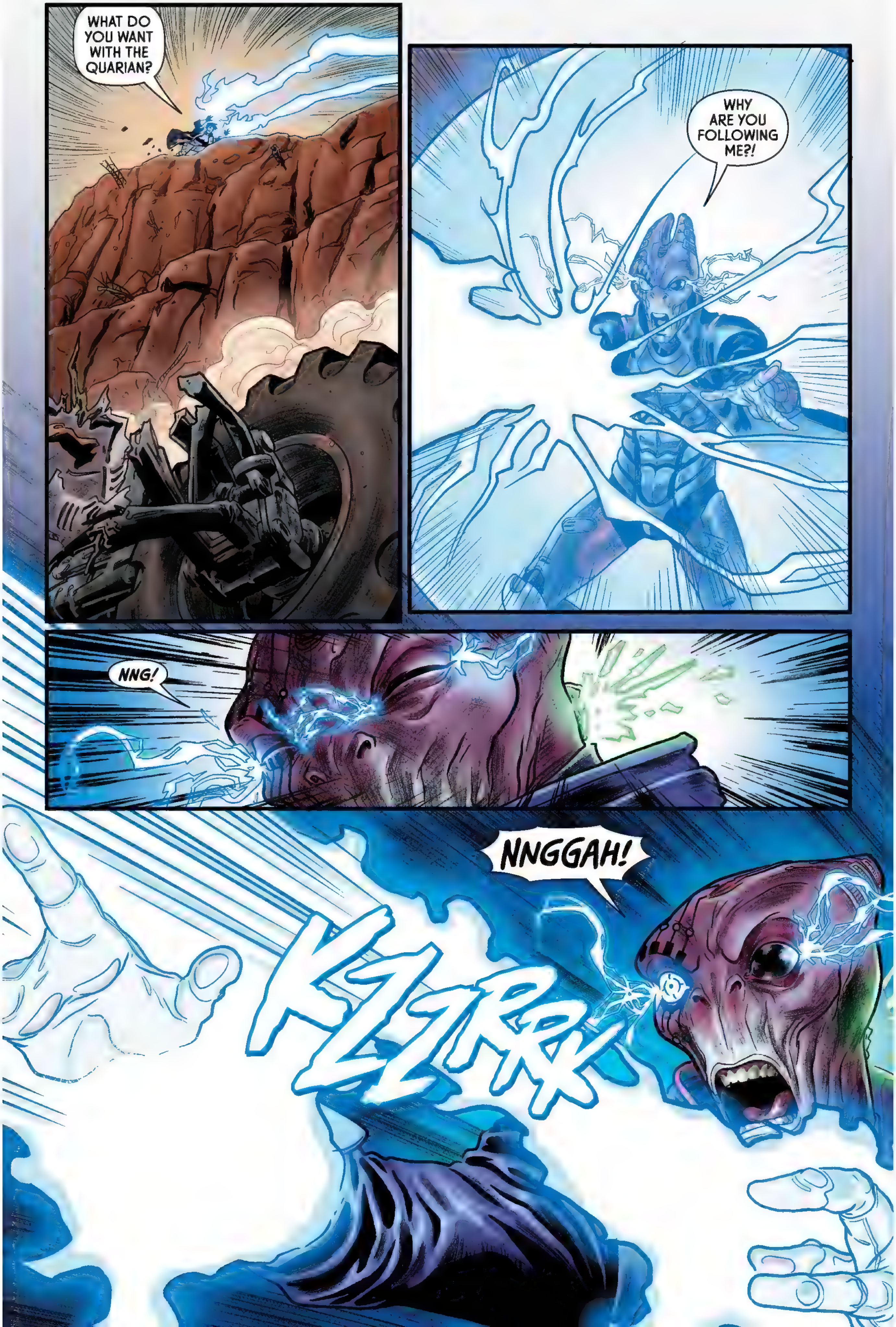

KKZZZRRK
HIS NAME IS *VIEGLE*--WHERE DO I FIND HIM?

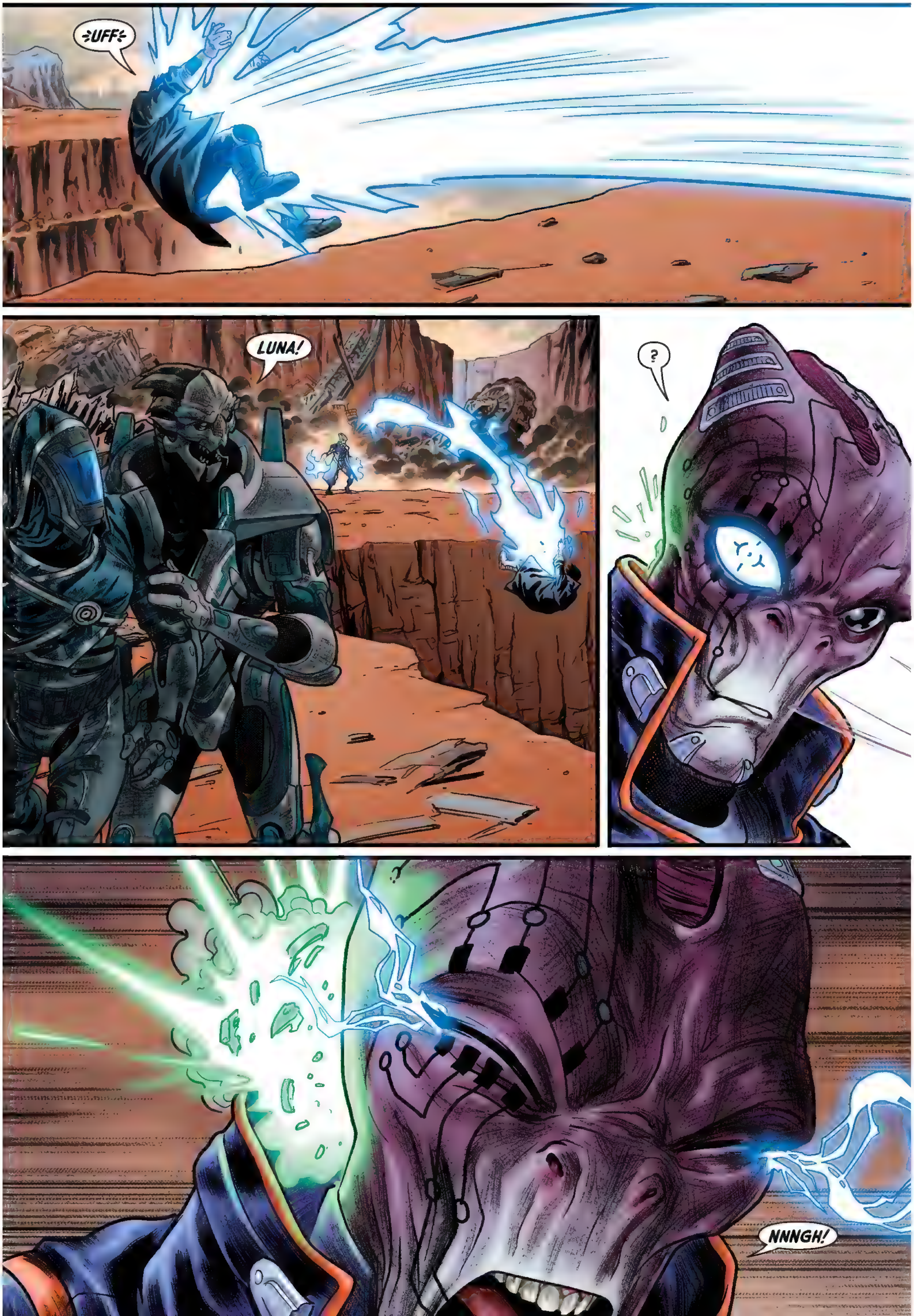

WHY IS HE LOOKING FOR *YOU?*
WHATEVER THAT *THING* IS OUT THERE, WE CAN'T LET IT GET TO HIM.
IS THERE ANOTHER WAY OUT?
A DOOR IN THE BACK. BUT IT'S PROBABLY--

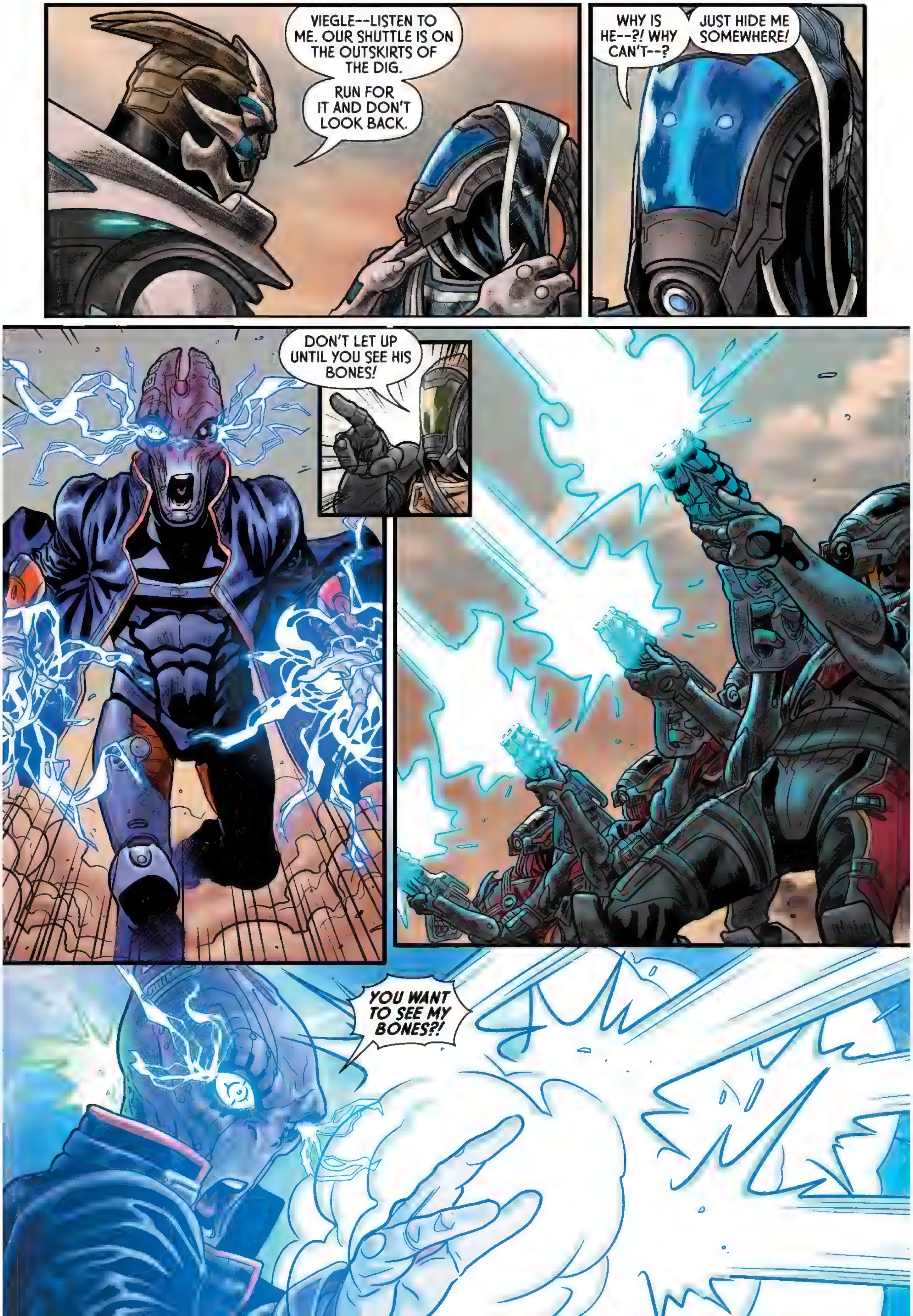

SKRAAAK
WHAM
KZZZRK

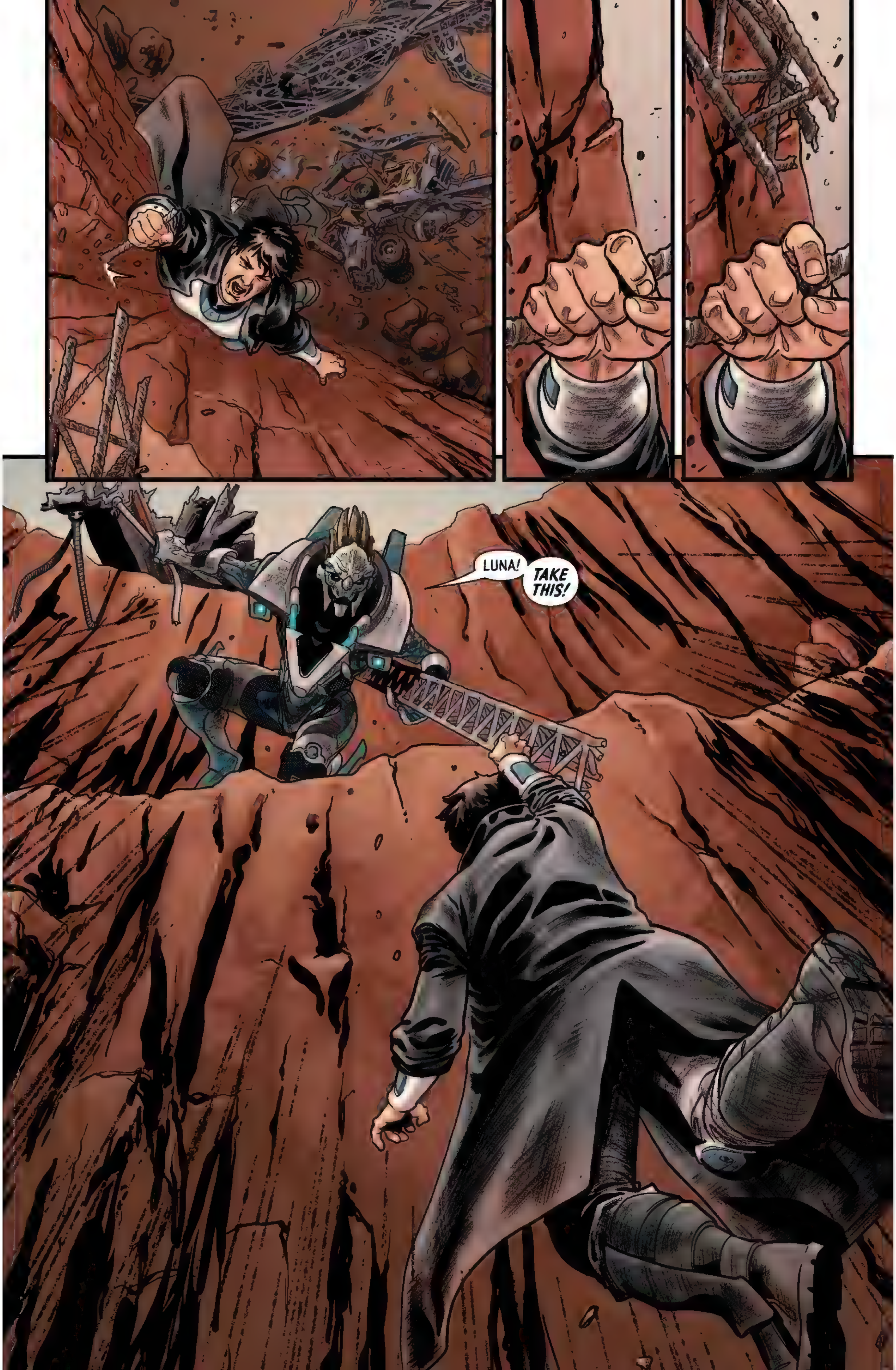

WE KNOW WHAT HAPPENED ON THE CITADEL NOW.
I'LL DEAL WITH THIS. TAKE VIEGLE BACK TO THE SHIP AND BE READY TO GO.
NO WAY--STICKING TOGETHER IS TACTICALLY THE SMARTER PLAY.
SAVING THE INITIATIVE IS OUR PRIORITY.
GET HIM TO THE SHIP AND GET HIM OUT OF HERE.
WITH OR WITHOUT ME.

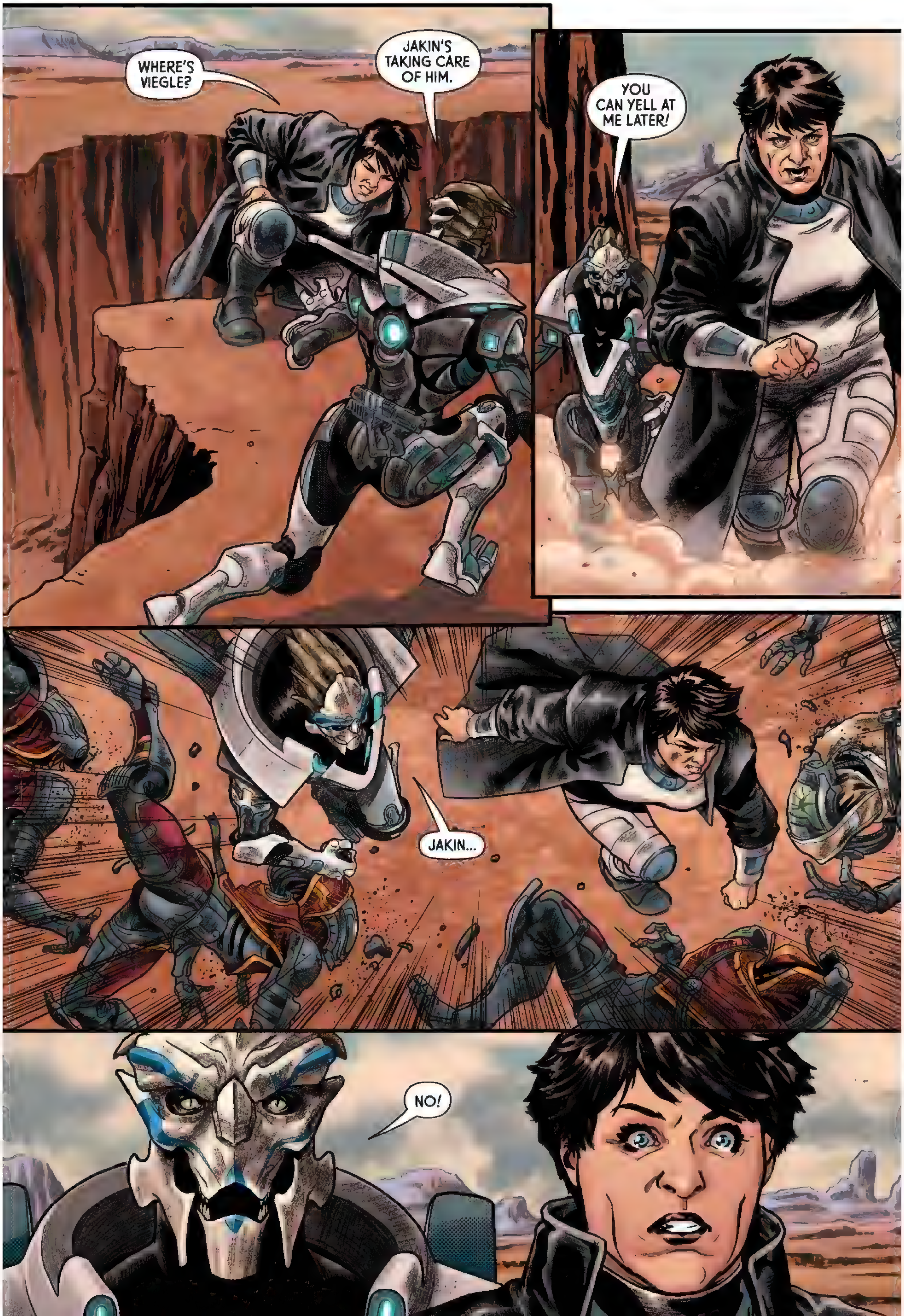

WHO ARE YOU AND WHAT DO YOU WANT HERE?
YOU WERE ON THE CITADEL!
ARE YOU FOLLOWING ME?!
KRAKOOM

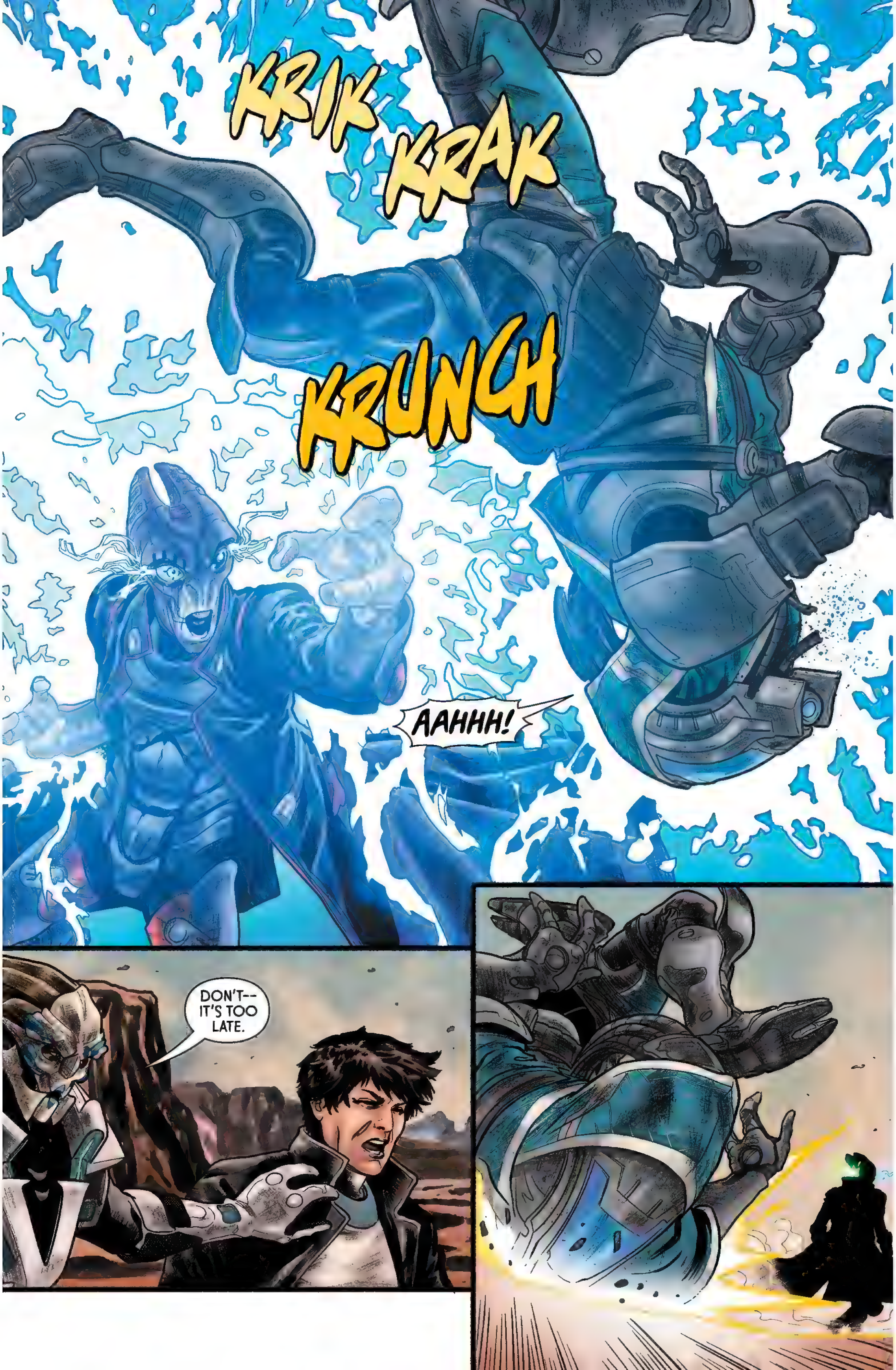

WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH THE QUARIAN?
WHY ARE YOU FOLLOWING ME?!
NNG!
NNGGAH!
KZZRRK

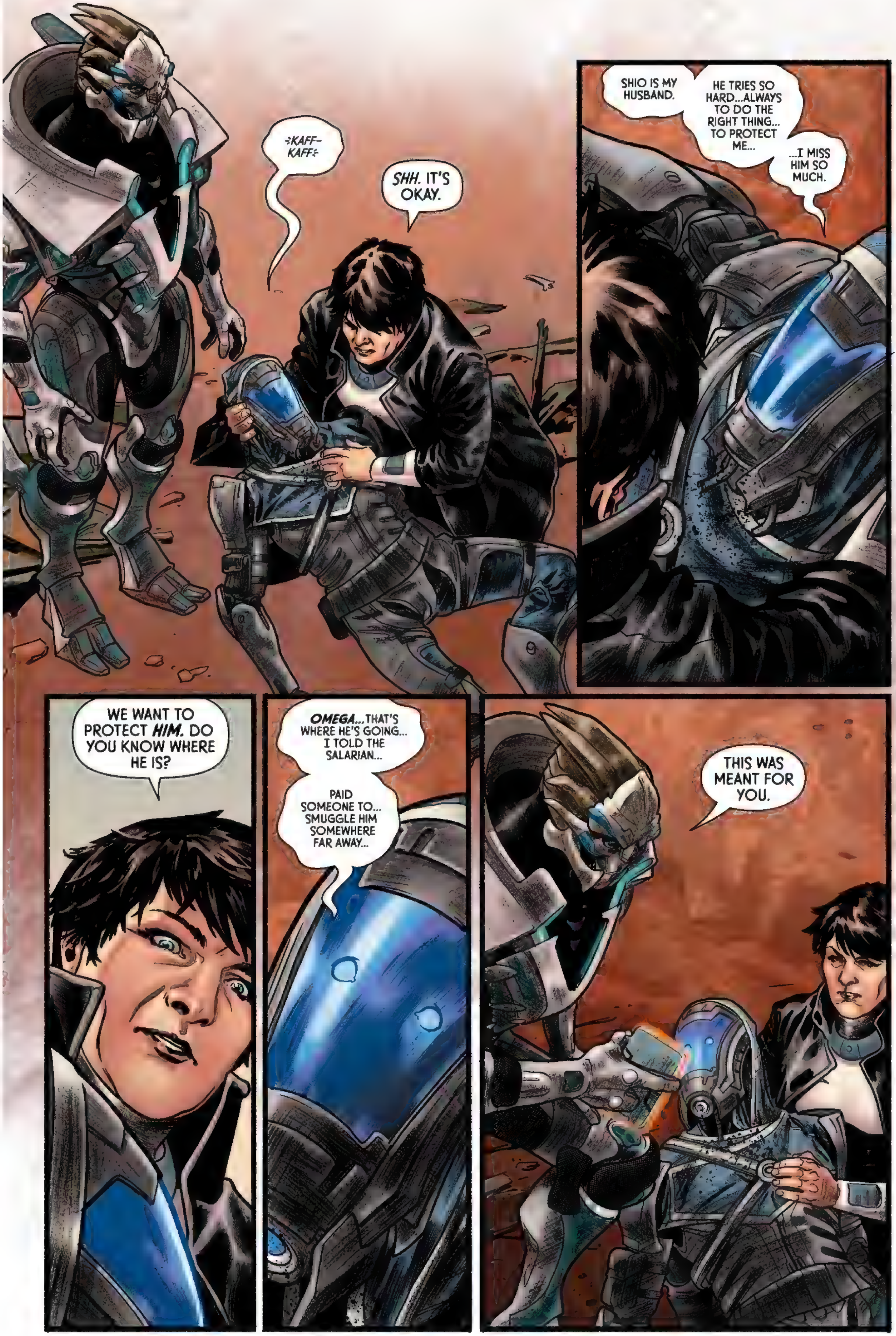

UFF
LUNA!
?
NNNGH!


VIEGLE--LISTEN TO ME. OUR SHUTTLE IS ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE DIG.
RUN FOR IT AND DON'T LOOK BACK.
WHY IS HE--?! WHY CAN'T--?
JUST HIDE ME SOMEWHERE!
DON'T LET UP UNTIL YOU SEE HIS BONES!
YOU WANT TO SEE MY BONES?!

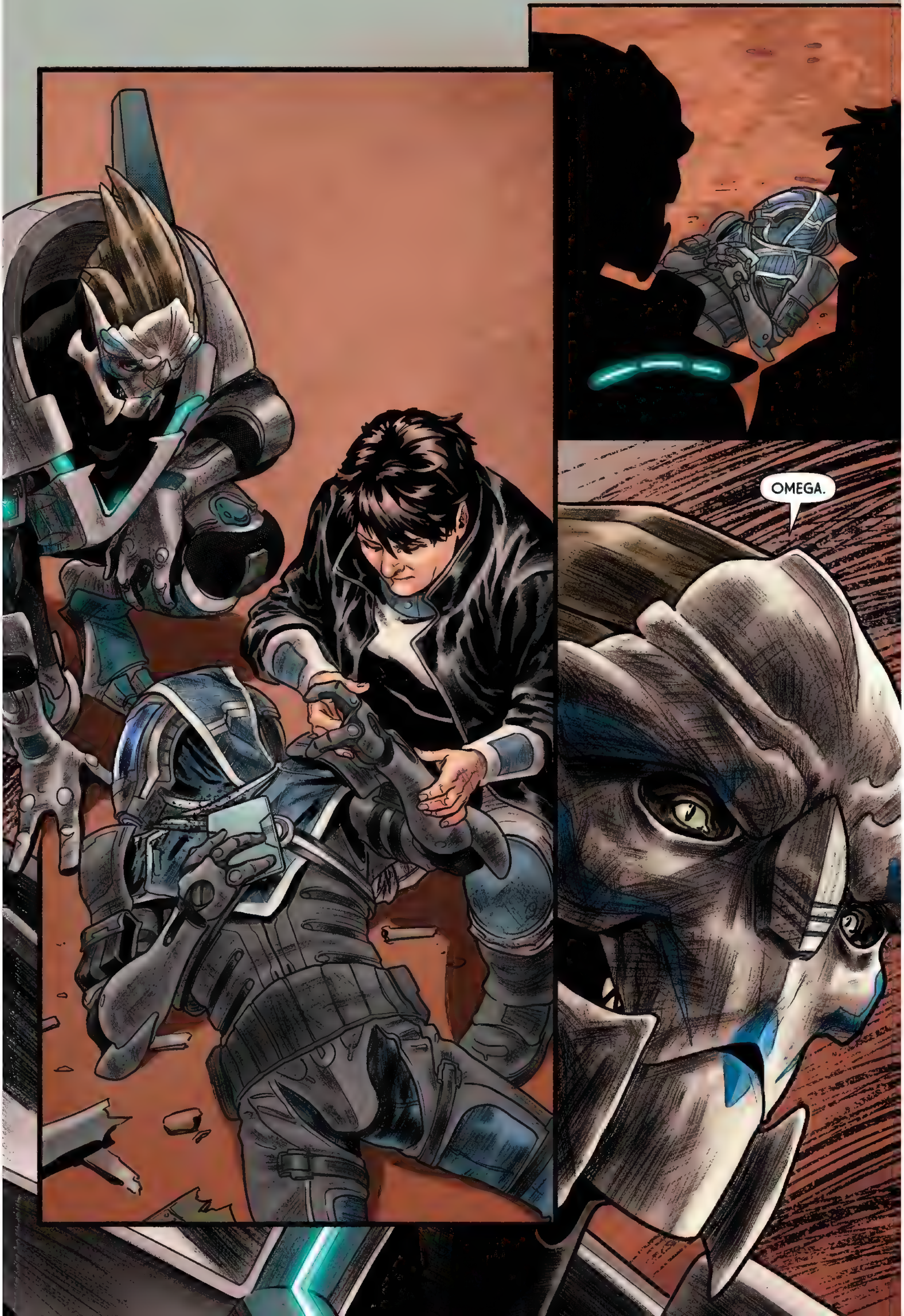

LUNA!
TAKE THIS!

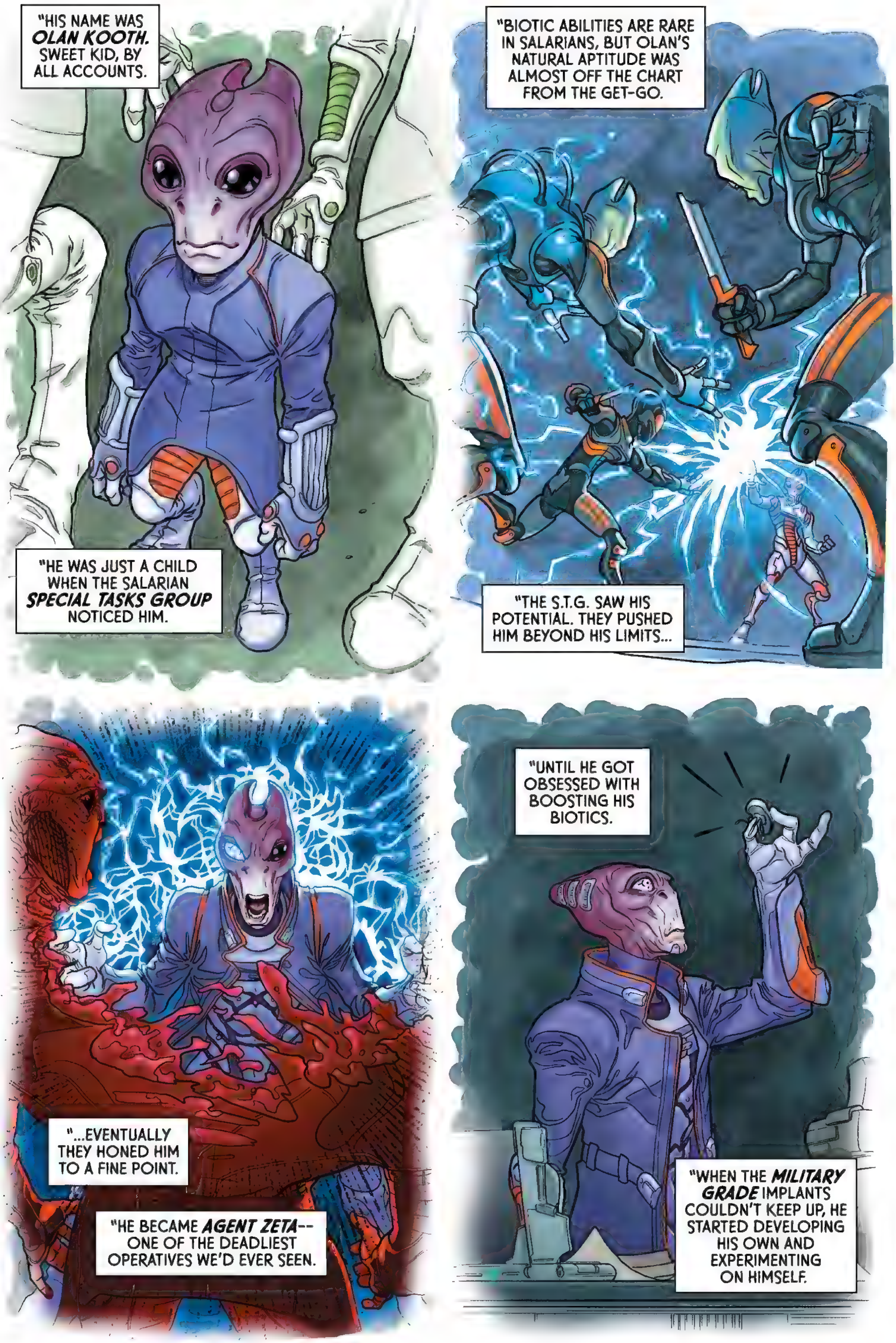

WHERE'S VIEGLE?
JAKIN'S TAKING CARE OF HIM.
YOU CAN YELL AT ME LATER!
JAKIN...
NO!

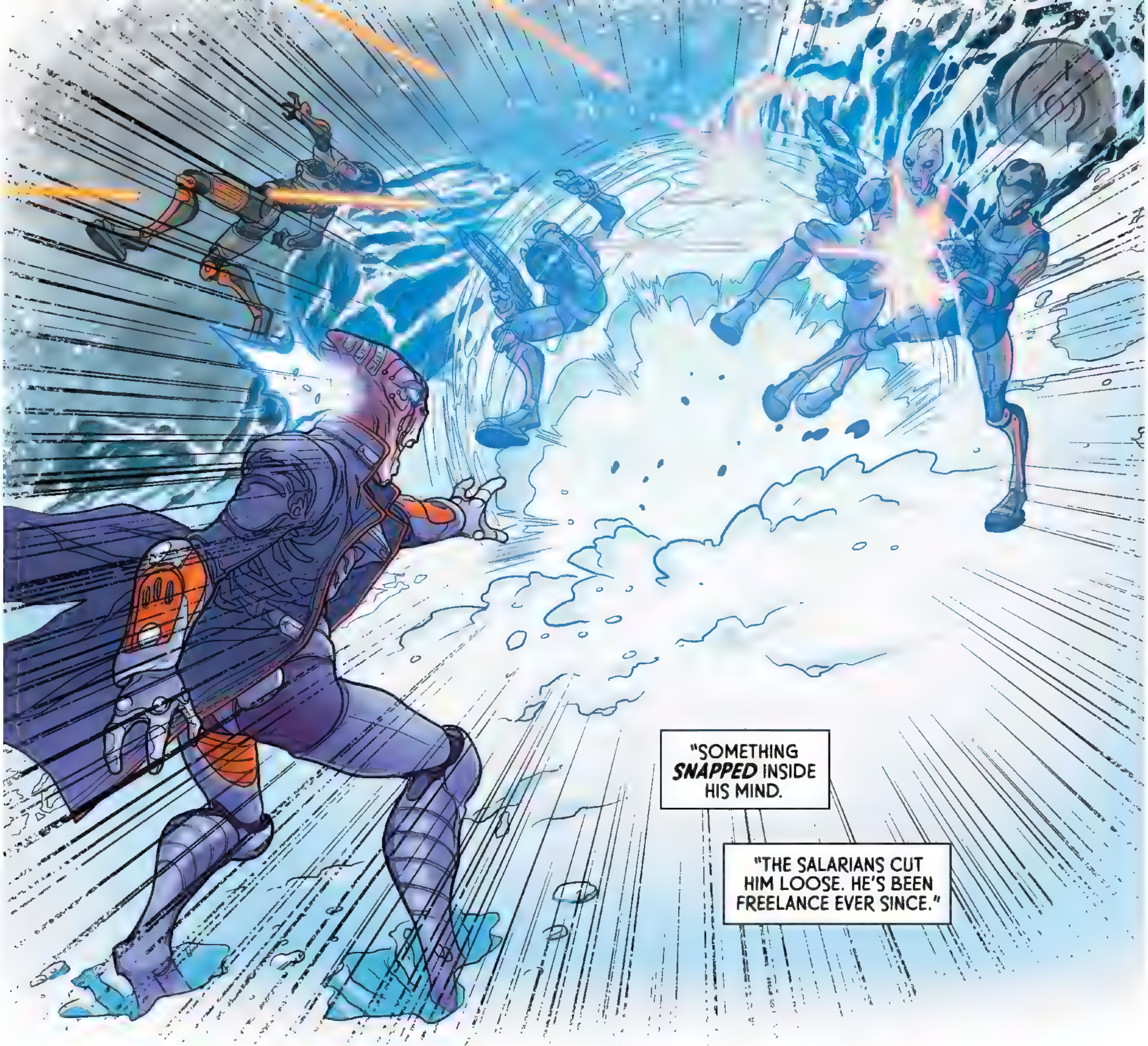

KRIK
KRAK
KRUNCH
AAHHH!
DON'T-- IT'S TOO LATE.

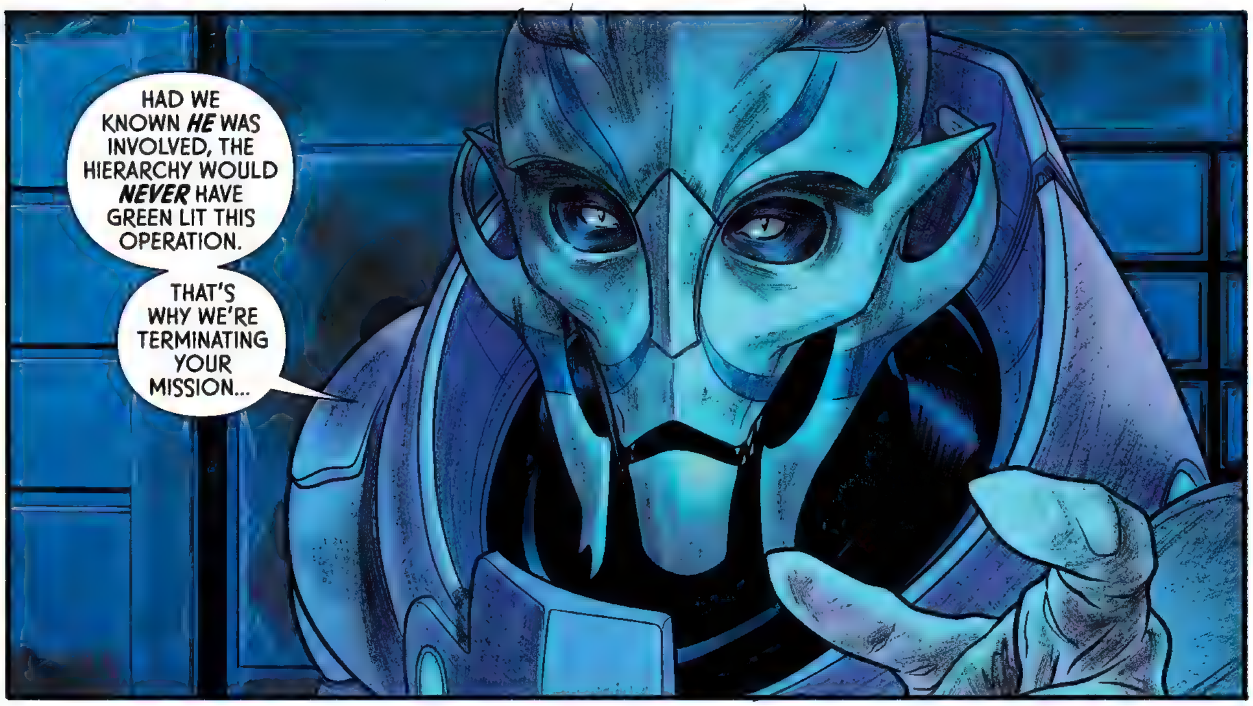


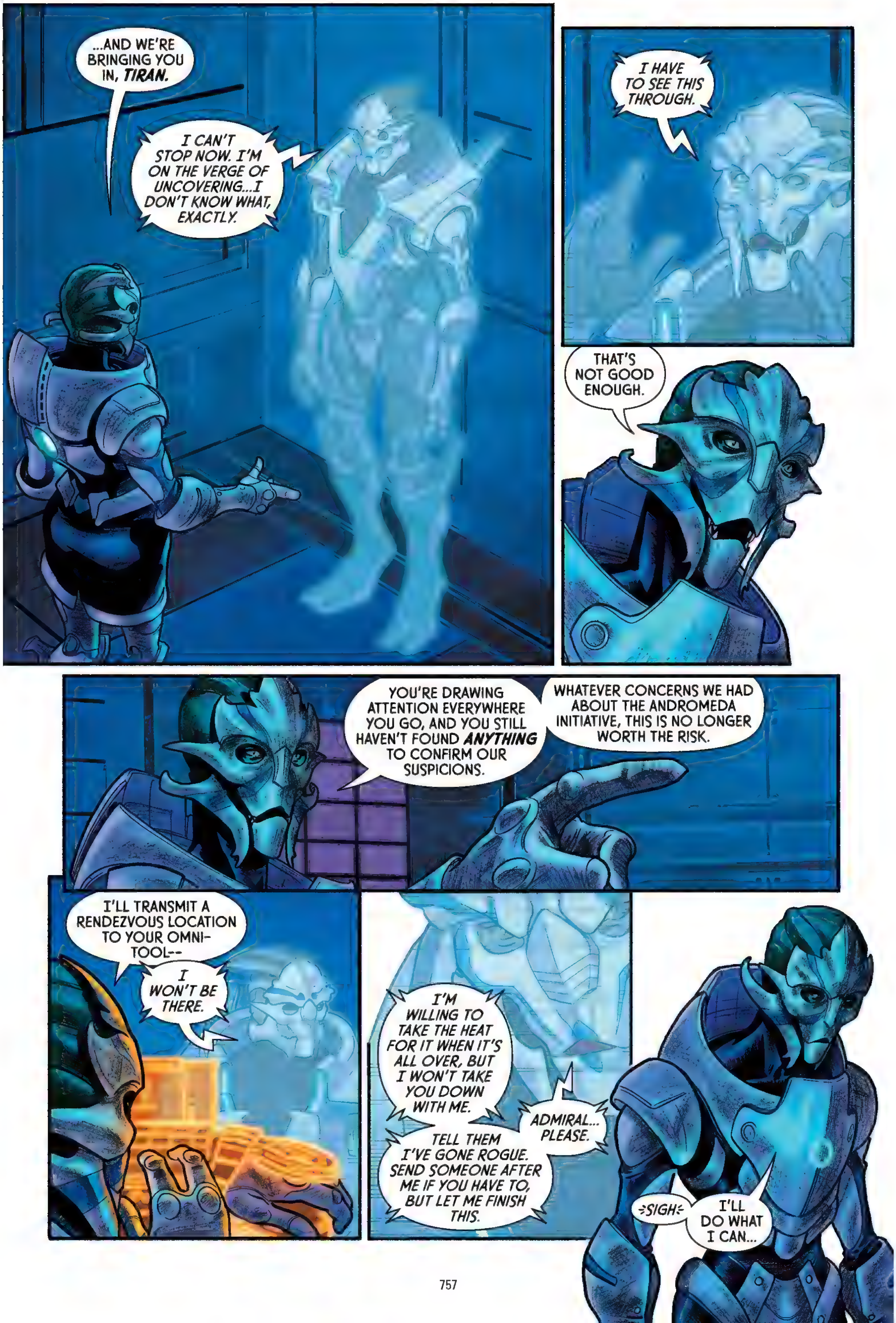
⚡KAFF-KAFF⚡
SHH. IT'S OKAY.
SHIO IS MY HUSBAND.
HE TRIES SO HARD...ALWAYS TO DO THE RIGHT THING... TO PROTECT ME...
...I MISS HIM SO MUCH.
WE WANT TO PROTECT ***HIM.*** DO YOU KNOW WHERE HE IS?
OMEGA... THAT'S WHERE HE'S GOING... I TOLD THE SALARIAN...
PAID SOMEONE TO... SMUGGLE HIM SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY...
THIS WAS MEANT FOR YOU.

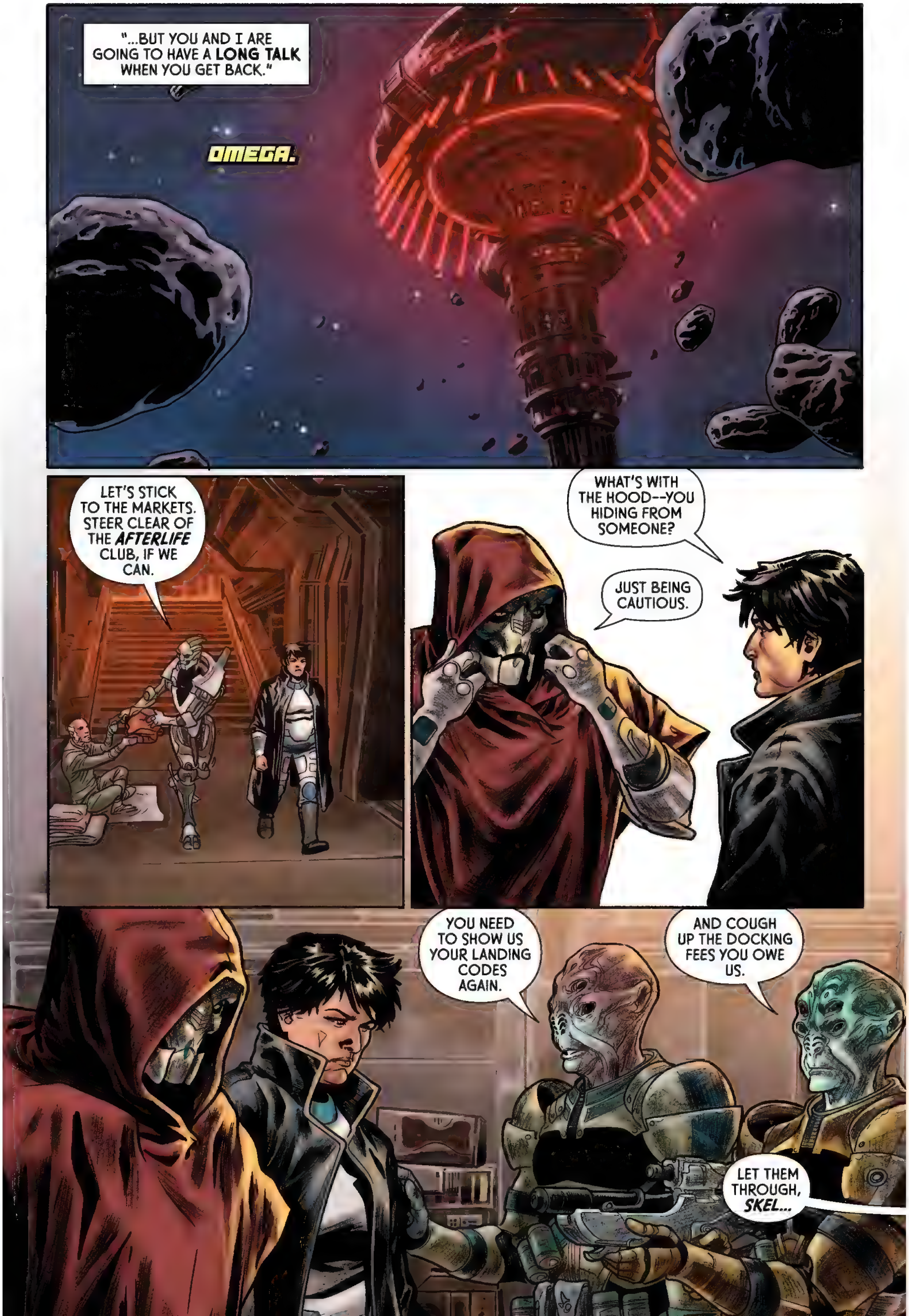

OMEGA.

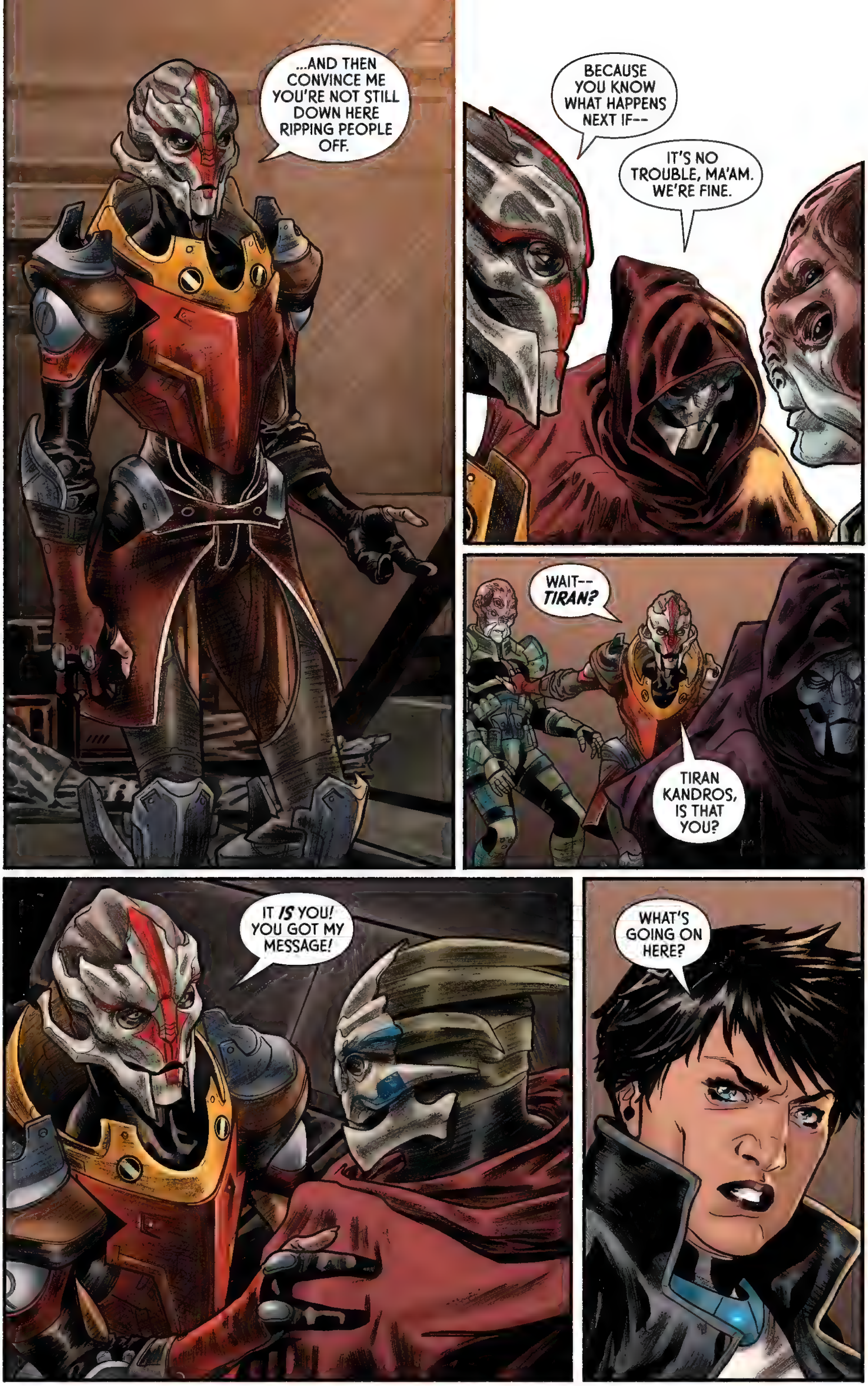

"HIS NAME WAS ***OLAN KOOTH.*** SWEET KID, BY ALL ACCOUNTS.
"HE WAS JUST A CHILD WHEN THE SALARIAN ***SPECIAL TASKS GROUP*** NOTICED HIM.
"BIOTIC ABILITIES ARE RARE IN SALARIANS, BUT OLAN'S NATURAL APTITUDE WAS ALMOST OFF THE CHART FROM THE GET-GO.
"THE S.T.G. SAW HIS POTENTIAL. THEY PUSHED HIM BEYOND HIS LIMITS...
"...EVENTUALLY THEY HONED HIM TO A FINE POINT.
"HE BECAME ***AGENT ZETA***-- ONE OF THE DEADLIEST OPERATIVES WE'D EVER SEEN.
"UNTIL HE GOT OBSESSED WITH BOOSTING HIS BIOTICS.
"WHEN THE ***MILITARY GRADE*** IMPLANTS COULDN'T KEEP UP, HE STARTED DEVELOPING HIS OWN AND EXPERIMENTING ON HIMSELF.

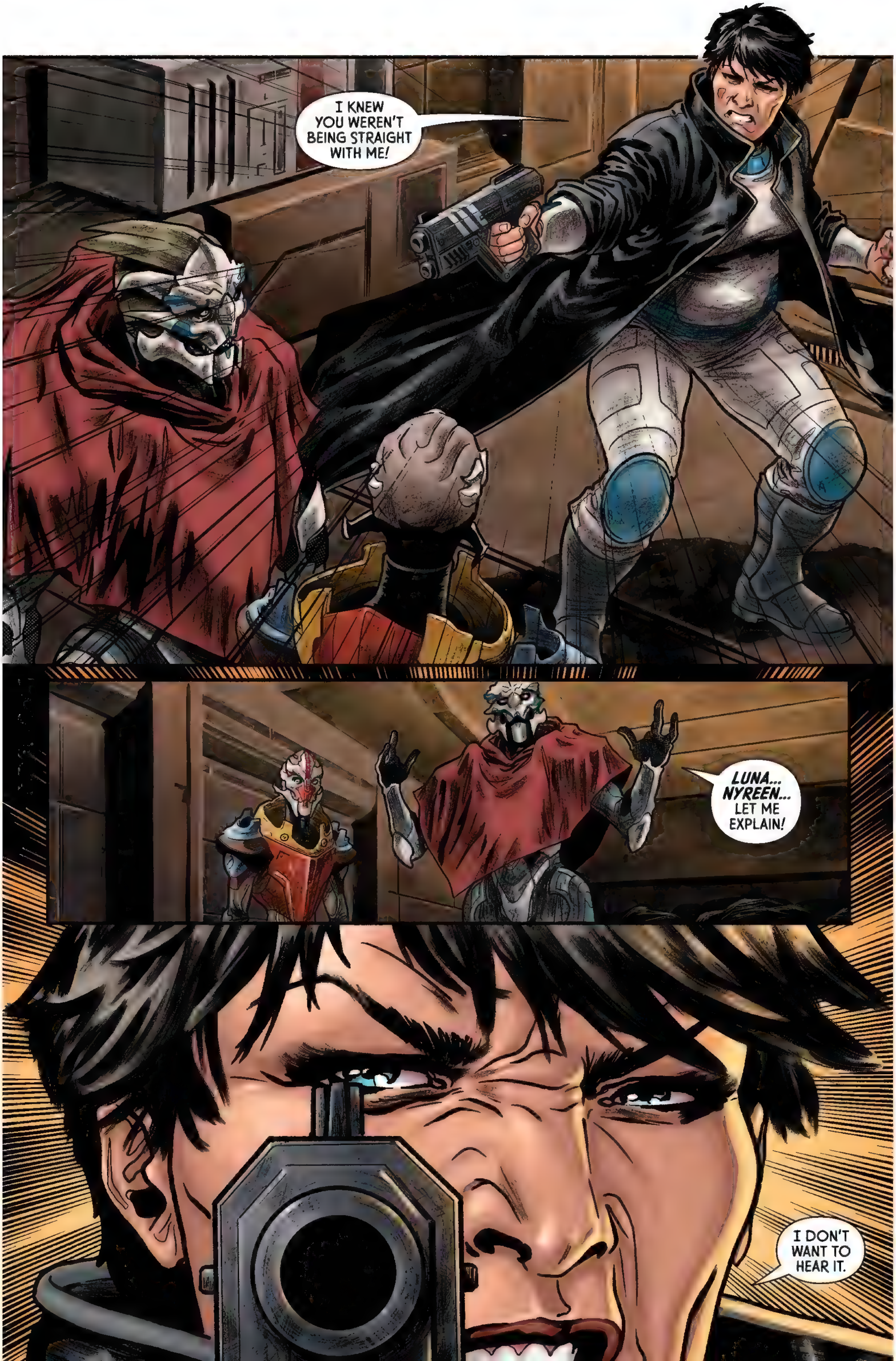

"SOMETHING SNAPPED INSIDE HIS MIND.
"THE SALARIANS CUT HIM LOOSE. HE'S BEEN FREELANCE EVER SINCE."

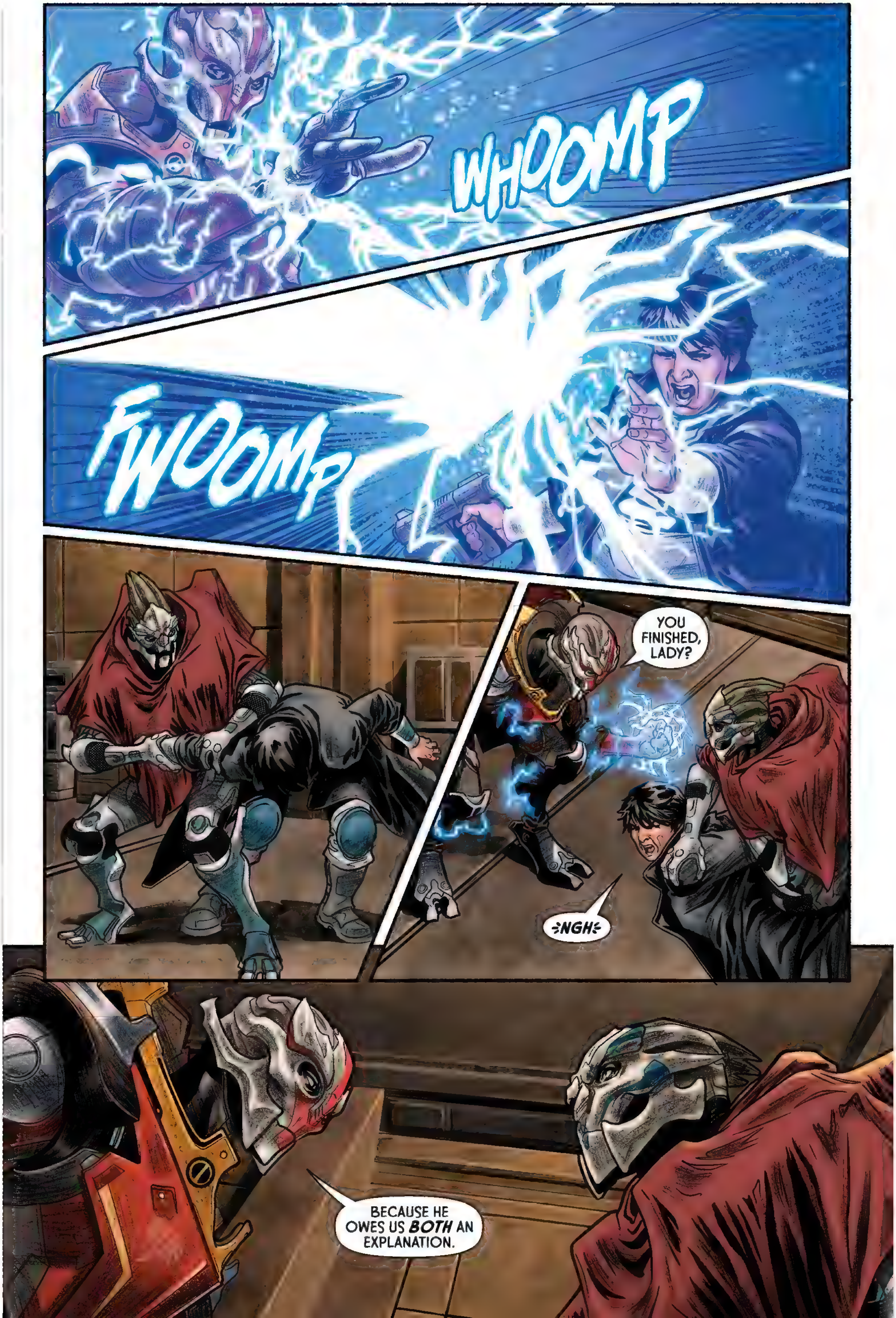

HAD WE KNOWN HE WAS INVOLVED, THE HIERARCHY WOULD NEVER HAVE GREEN LIT THIS OPERATION.
THAT'S WHY WE'RE TERMINATING YOUR MISSION...

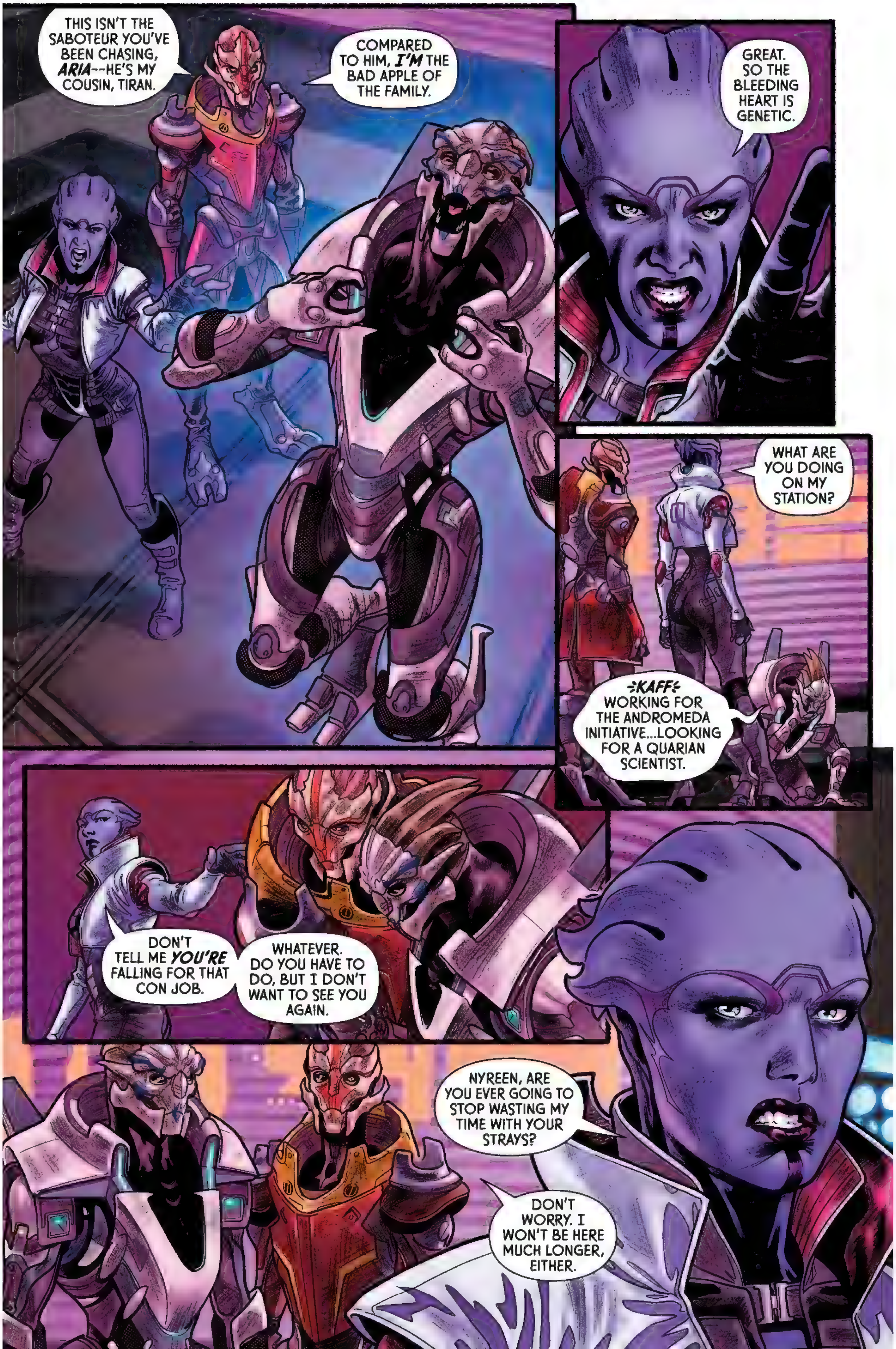

...AND WE'RE BRINGING YOU IN, *TIRAN.*
I CAN'T STOP NOW. I'M ON THE VERGE OF UNCOVERING...I DON'T KNOW WHAT, EXACTLY.
I HAVE TO SEE THIS THROUGH.
THAT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH.
YOU'RE DRAWING ATTENTION EVERYWHERE YOU GO, AND YOU STILL HAVEN'T FOUND ***ANYTHING*** TO CONFIRM OUR SUSPICIONS.
WHATEVER CONCERNS WE HAD ABOUT THE ANDROMEDA INITIATIVE, THIS IS NO LONGER WORTH THE RISK.
I'LL TRANSMIT A RENDEZVOUS LOCATION TO YOUR OMNI-TOOL--
I WON'T BE THERE.
I'M WILLING TO TAKE THE HEAT FOR IT WHEN IT'S ALL OVER, BUT I WON'T TAKE YOU DOWN WITH ME.
TELL THEM I'VE GONE ROGUE. SEND SOMEONE AFTER ME IF YOU HAVE TO, BUT LET ME FINISH THIS.
ADMIRAL... PLEASE.
SIGH
I'LL DO WHAT I CAN...

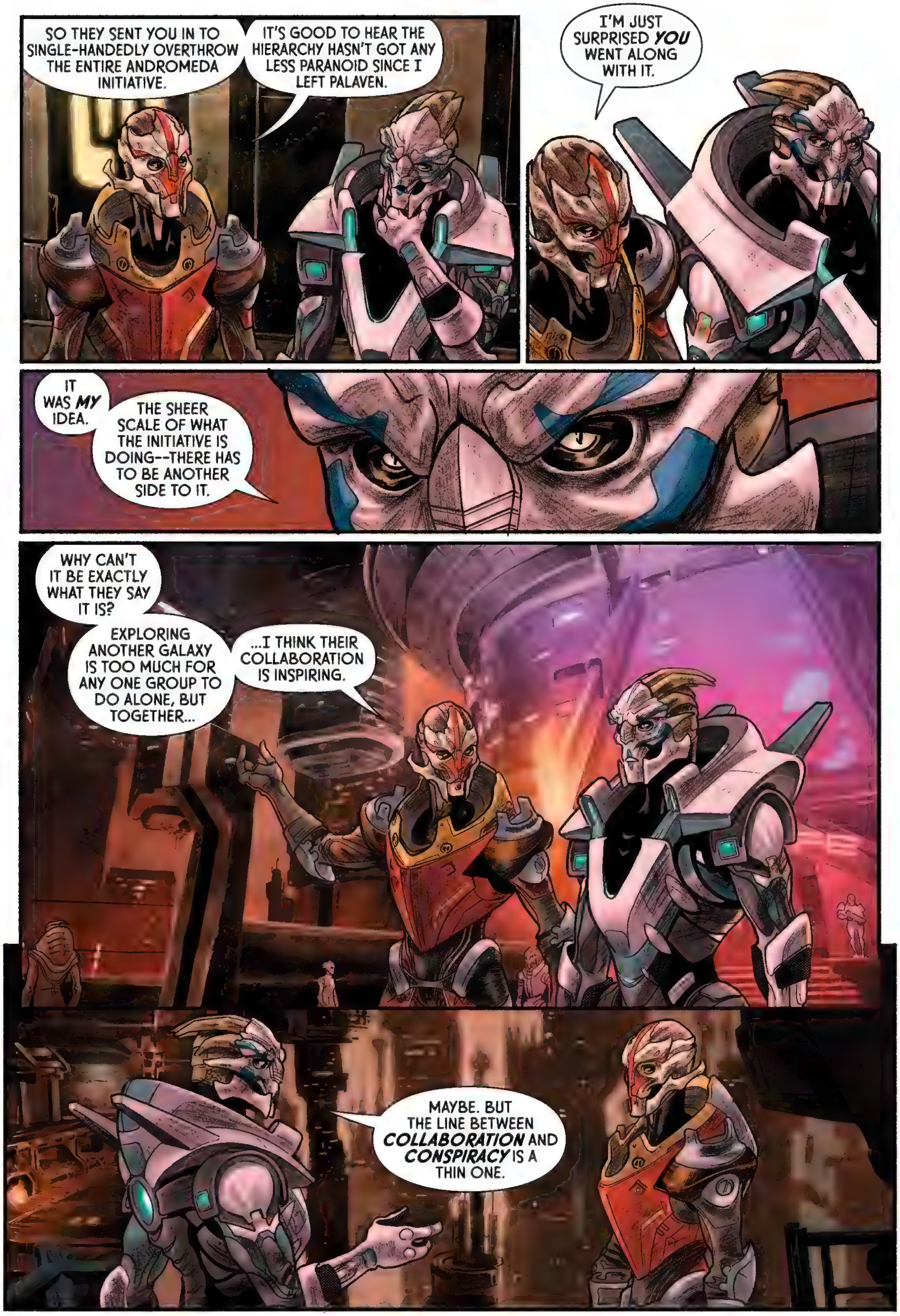

"...BUT YOU AND I ARE GOING TO HAVE A **LONG TALK** WHEN YOU GET BACK."
OMEGA.
LET'S STICK TO THE MARKETS. STEER CLEAR OF THE ***AFTERLIFE*** CLUB, IF WE CAN.
WHAT'S WITH THE HOOD--YOU HIDING FROM SOMEONE?
JUST BEING CAUTIOUS.
YOU NEED TO SHOW US YOUR LANDING CODES AGAIN.
AND COUGH UP THE DOCKING FEES YOU OWE US.
LET THEM THROUGH, ***SKEL...***

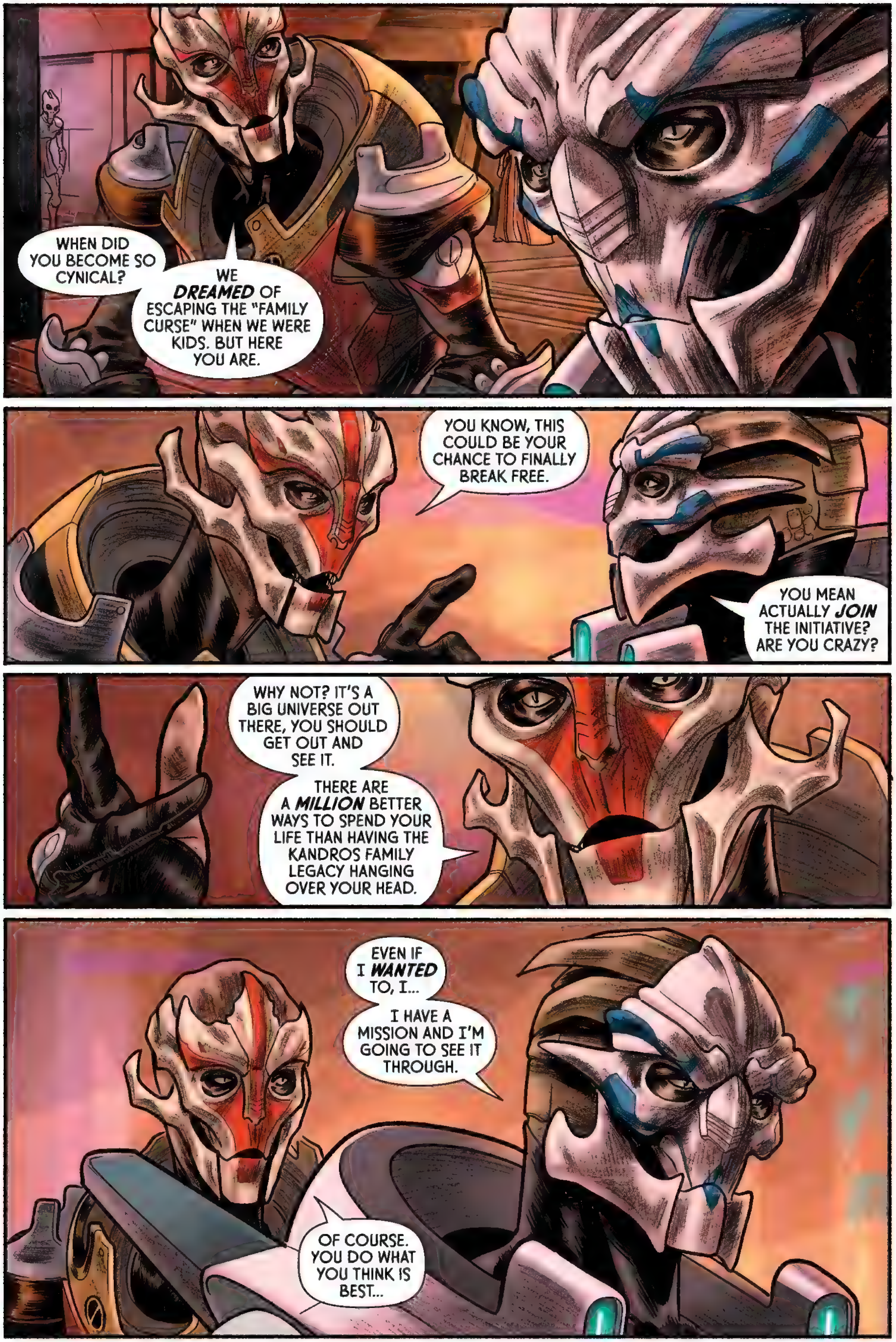

...AND THEN CONVINCE ME YOU'RE NOT STILL DOWN HERE RIPPING PEOPLE OFF.
BECAUSE YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS NEXT IF--
IT'S NO TROUBLE, MA'AM. WE'RE FINE.
WAIT-- *TIRAN?*
TIRAN KANDROS, IS THAT YOU?
IT *IS* YOU! YOU GOT MY MESSAGE!
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

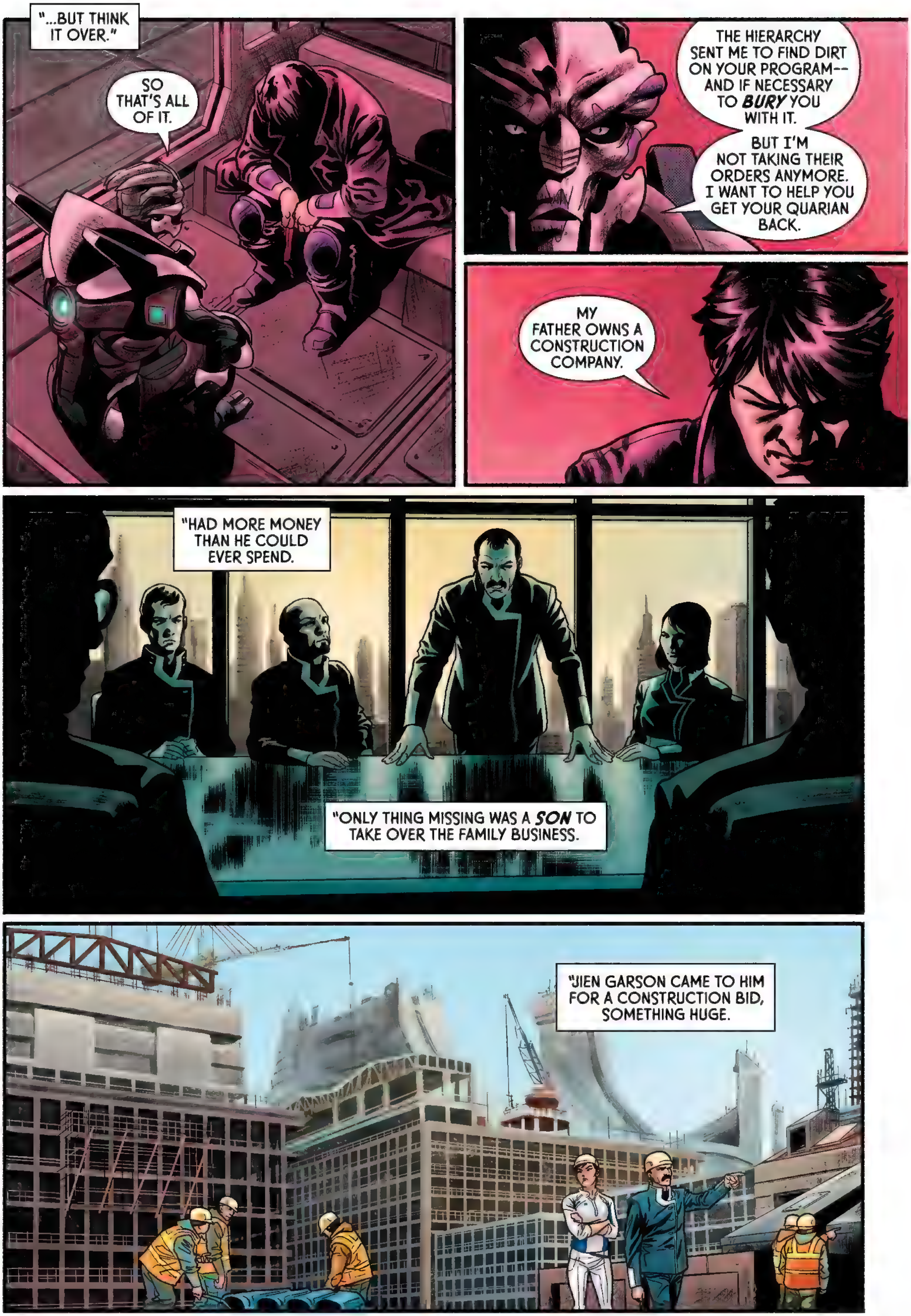

I KNEW YOU WEREN'T BEING STRAIGHT WITH ME!
LUNA... NYREEN... LET ME EXPLAIN!
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT.

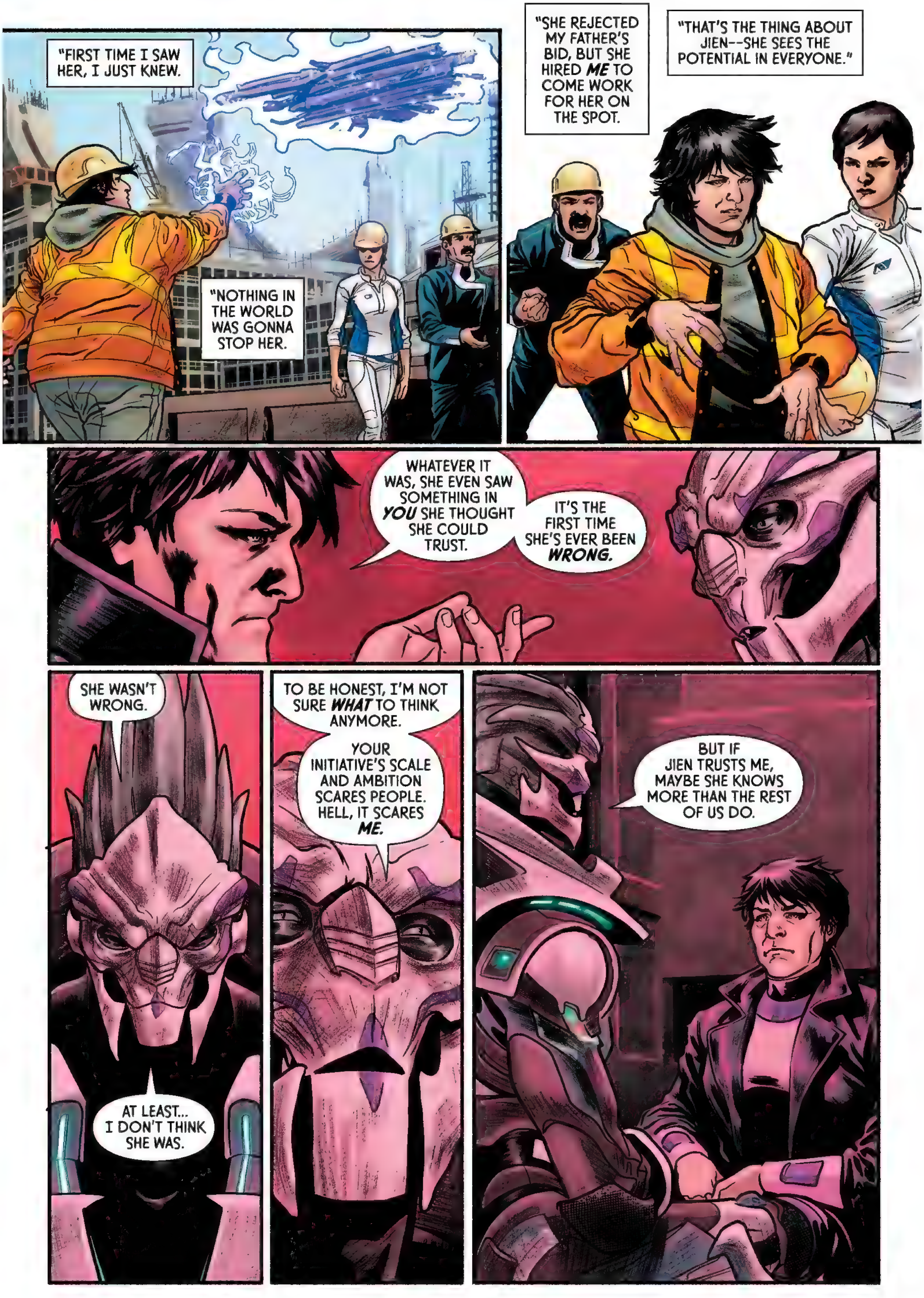

WHOOMP
FWOOMP
YOU FINISHED, LADY?
NGH
BECAUSE HE OWES US *BOTH* AN EXPLANATION.

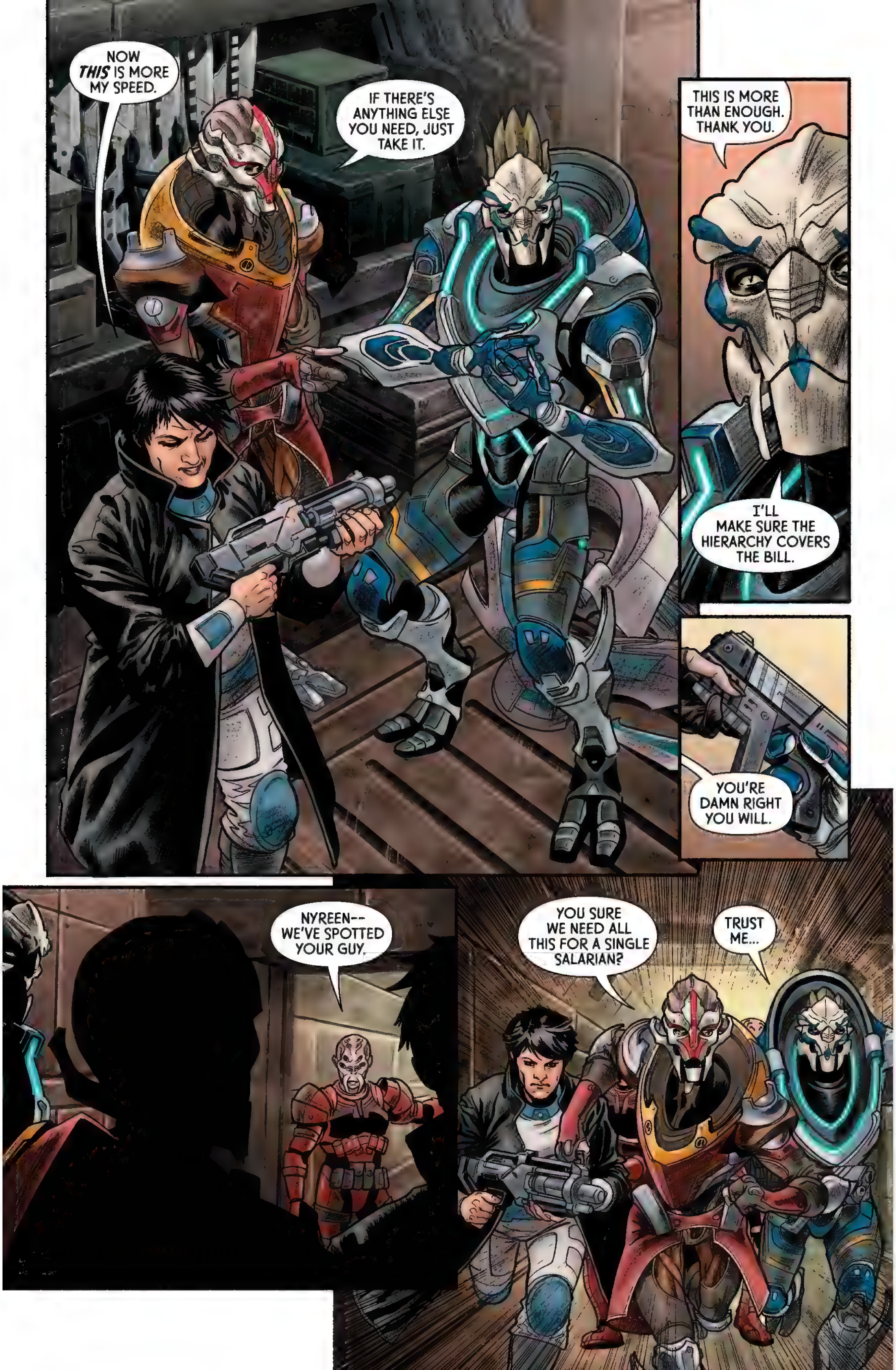

THIS ISN'T THE SABOTEUR YOU'VE BEEN CHASING, ***ARIA***--HE'S MY COUSIN, TIRAN.
COMPARED TO HIM, ***I'M*** THE BAD APPLE OF THE FAMILY.
GREAT. SO THE BLEEDING HEART IS GENETIC.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING ON MY STATION?
KAFF WORKING FOR THE ANDROMEDA INITIATIVE...LOOKING FOR A QUARIAN SCIENTIST.
DON'T TELL ME ***YOU'RE*** FALLING FOR THAT CON JOB.
WHATEVER. DO YOU HAVE TO DO, BUT I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
NYREEN, ARE YOU EVER GOING TO STOP WASTING MY TIME WITH YOUR STRAYS?
DON'T WORRY. I WON'T BE HERE MUCH LONGER, EITHER.

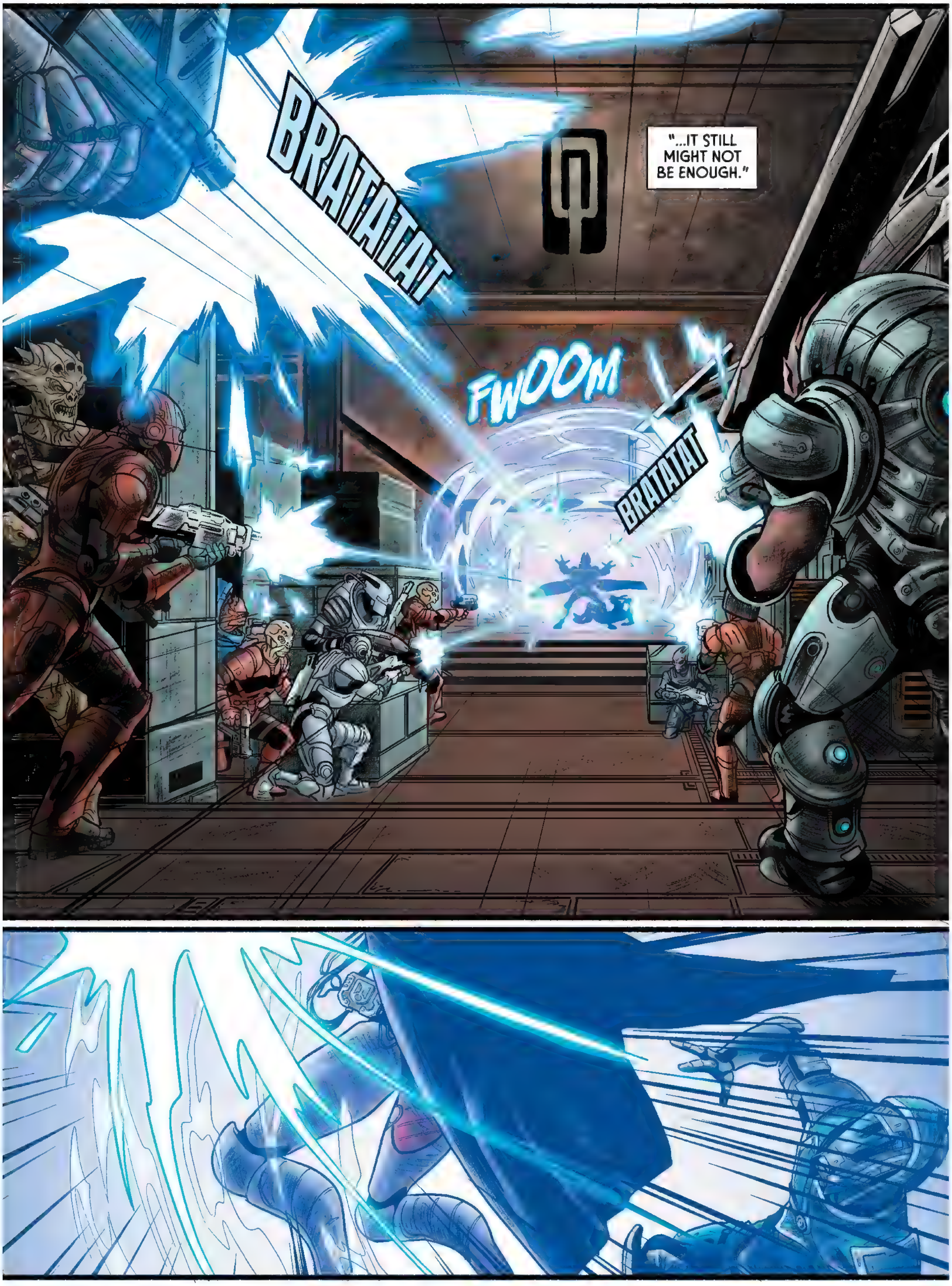

SO THEY SENT YOU IN TO SINGLE-HANDEDLY OVERTHROW THE ENTIRE ANDROMEDA INITIATIVE.
IT'S GOOD TO HEAR THE HIERARCHY HASN'T GOT ANY LESS PARANOID SINCE I LEFT PALAVEN.
I'M JUST SURPRISED ***YOU*** WENT ALONG WITH IT.
IT WAS ***MY*** IDEA.
THE SHEER SCALE OF WHAT THE INITIATIVE IS DOING--THERE HAS TO BE ANOTHER SIDE TO IT.
WHY CAN'T IT BE EXACTLY WHAT THEY SAY IT IS?
EXPLORING ANOTHER GALAXY IS TOO MUCH FOR ANY ONE GROUP TO DO ALONE, BUT TOGETHER...
...I THINK THEIR COLLABORATION IS INSPIRING.
MAYBE. BUT THE LINE BETWEEN ***COLLABORATION*** AND ***CONSPIRACY*** IS A THIN ONE.

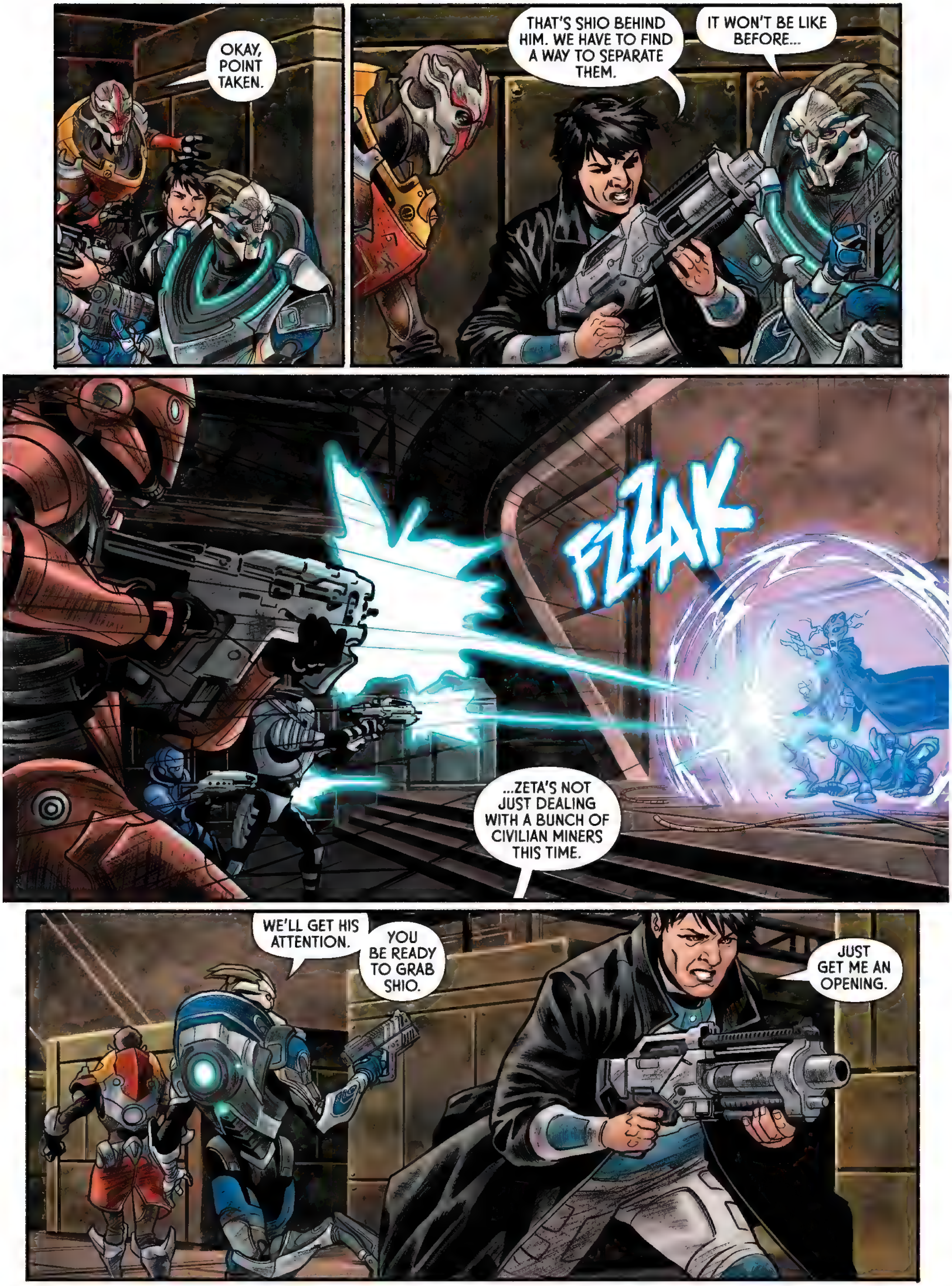

WHEN DID YOU BECOME SO CYNICAL?
WE **DREAMED** OF ESCAPING THE "FAMILY CURSE" WHEN WE WERE KIDS. BUT HERE YOU ARE.
YOU KNOW, THIS COULD BE YOUR CHANCE TO FINALLY BREAK FREE.
YOU MEAN ACTUALLY **JOIN** THE INITIATIVE? ARE YOU CRAZY?
WHY NOT? IT'S A BIG UNIVERSE OUT THERE, YOU SHOULD GET OUT AND SEE IT.
THERE ARE A **MILLION** BETTER WAYS TO SPEND YOUR LIFE THAN HAVING THE KANDROS FAMILY LEGACY HANGING OVER YOUR HEAD.
EVEN IF I **WANTED** TO, I...
I HAVE A MISSION AND I'M GOING TO SEE IT THROUGH.
OF COURSE. YOU DO WHAT YOU THINK IS BEST...

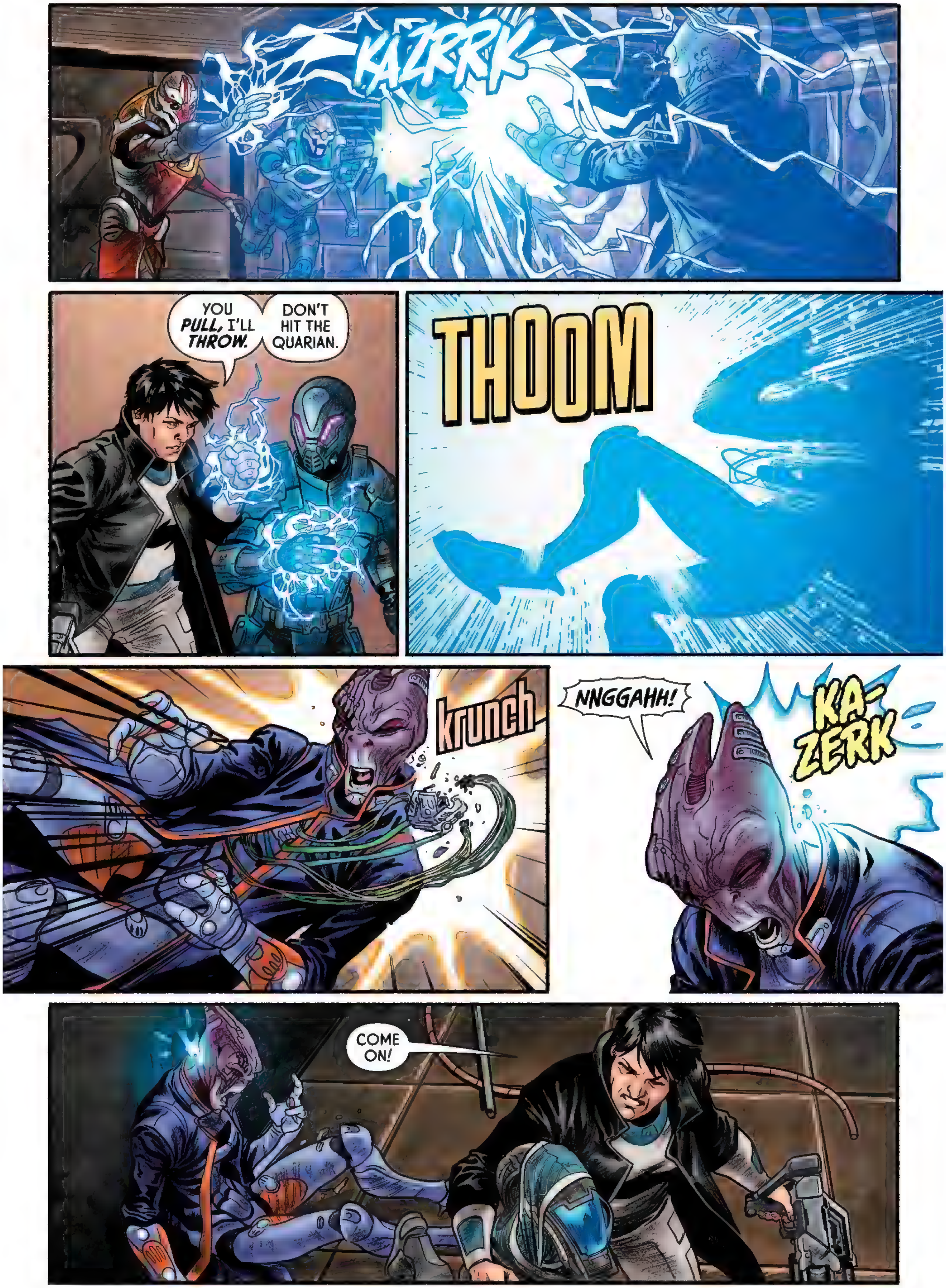

"...BUT THINK IT OVER."
SO THAT'S ALL OF IT.
THE HIERARCHY SENT ME TO FIND DIRT ON YOUR PROGRAM-- AND IF NECESSARY TO *BURY* YOU WITH IT.
BUT I'M NOT TAKING THEIR ORDERS ANYMORE. I WANT TO HELP YOU GET YOUR QUARIAN BACK.
MY FATHER OWNS A CONSTRUCTION COMPANY.
"HAD MORE MONEY THAN HE COULD EVER SPEND.
"ONLY THING MISSING WAS A *SON* TO TAKE OVER THE FAMILY BUSINESS.
"JIEN GARSON CAME TO HIM FOR A CONSTRUCTION BID, SOMETHING HUGE.

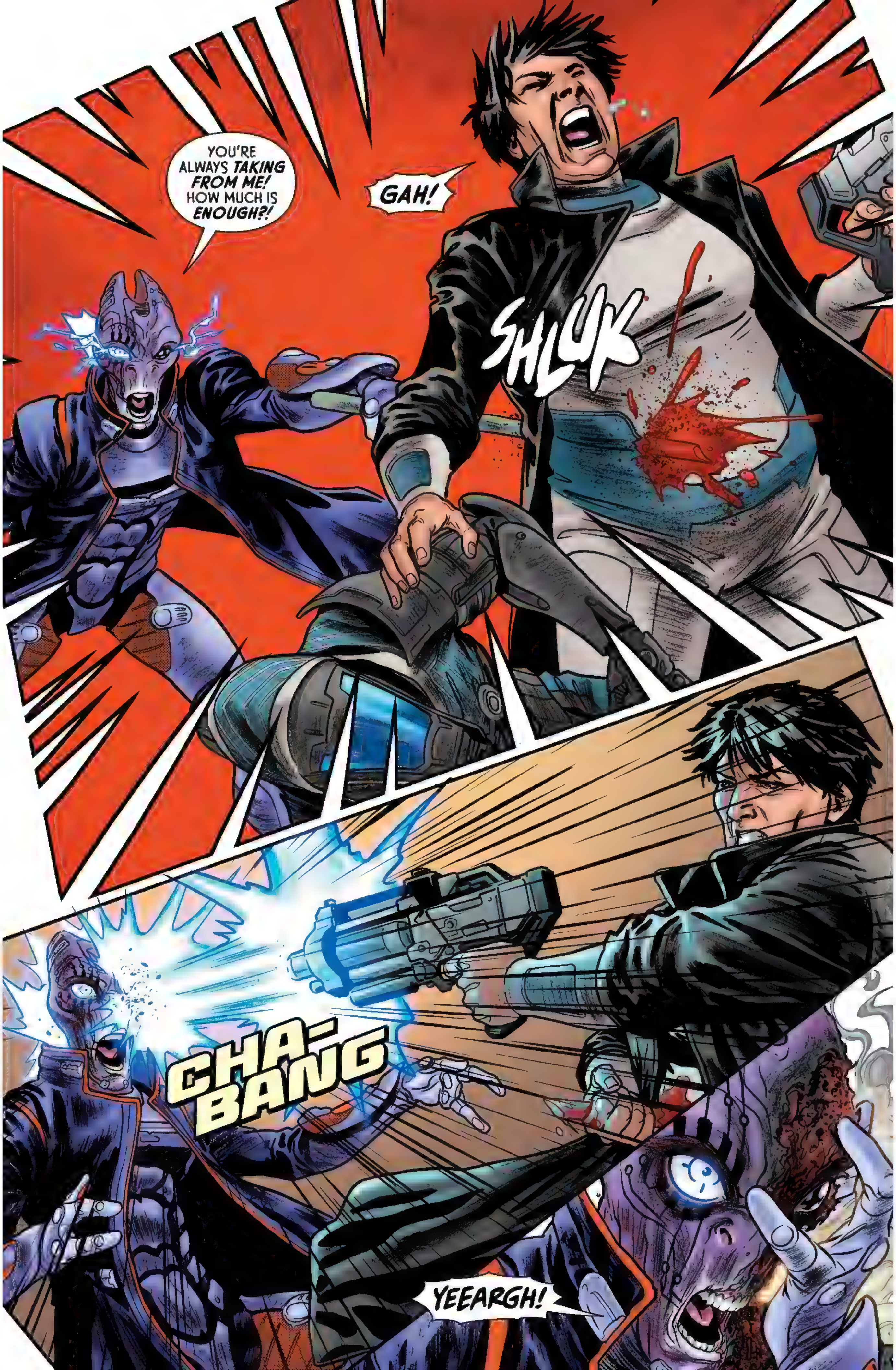

"FIRST TIME I SAW HER, I JUST KNEW.
"NOTHING IN THE WORLD WAS GONNA STOP HER.
"SHE REJECTED MY FATHER'S BID, BUT SHE HIRED ME TO COME WORK FOR HER ON THE SPOT.
"THAT'S THE THING ABOUT JIEN--SHE SEES THE POTENTIAL IN EVERYONE."
WHATEVER IT WAS, SHE EVEN SAW SOMETHING IN YOU SHE THOUGHT SHE COULD TRUST.
IT'S THE FIRST TIME SHE'S EVER BEEN WRONG.
SHE WASN'T WRONG.
AT LEAST... I DON'T THINK SHE WAS.
TO BE HONEST, I'M NOT SURE WHAT TO THINK ANYMORE.
YOUR INITIATIVE'S SCALE AND AMBITION SCARES PEOPLE. HELL, IT SCARES ME.
BUT IF JIEN TRUSTS ME, MAYBE SHE KNOWS MORE THAN THE REST OF US DO.

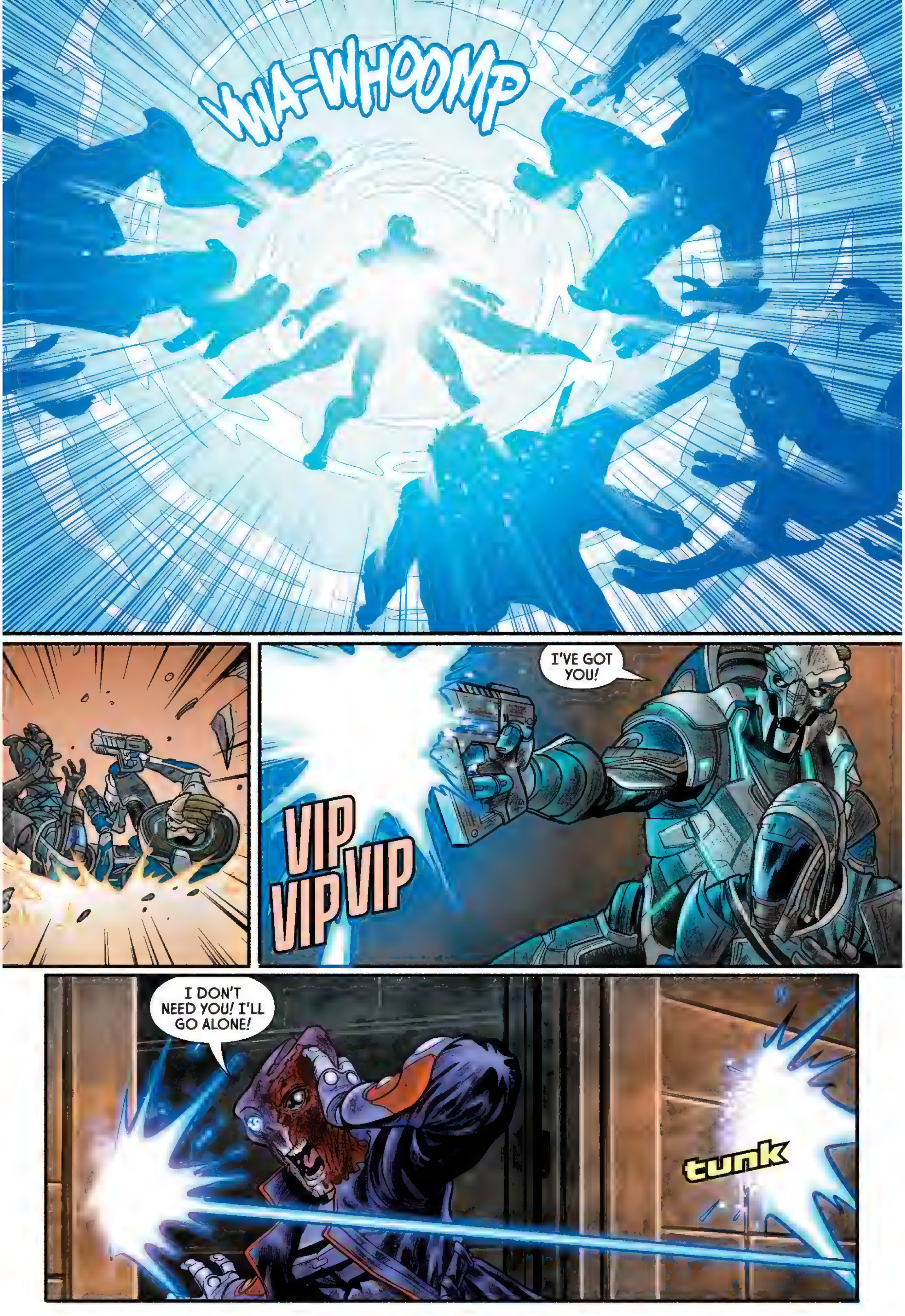

NOW *THIS* IS MORE MY SPEED.
IF THERE'S ANYTHING ELSE YOU NEED, JUST TAKE IT.
THIS IS MORE THAN ENOUGH. THANK YOU.
I'LL MAKE SURE THE HIERARCHY COVERS THE BILL.
YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT YOU WILL.
NYREEN-- WE'VE SPOTTED YOUR GUY.
YOU SURE WE NEED ALL THIS FOR A SINGLE SALARIAN?
TRUST ME...

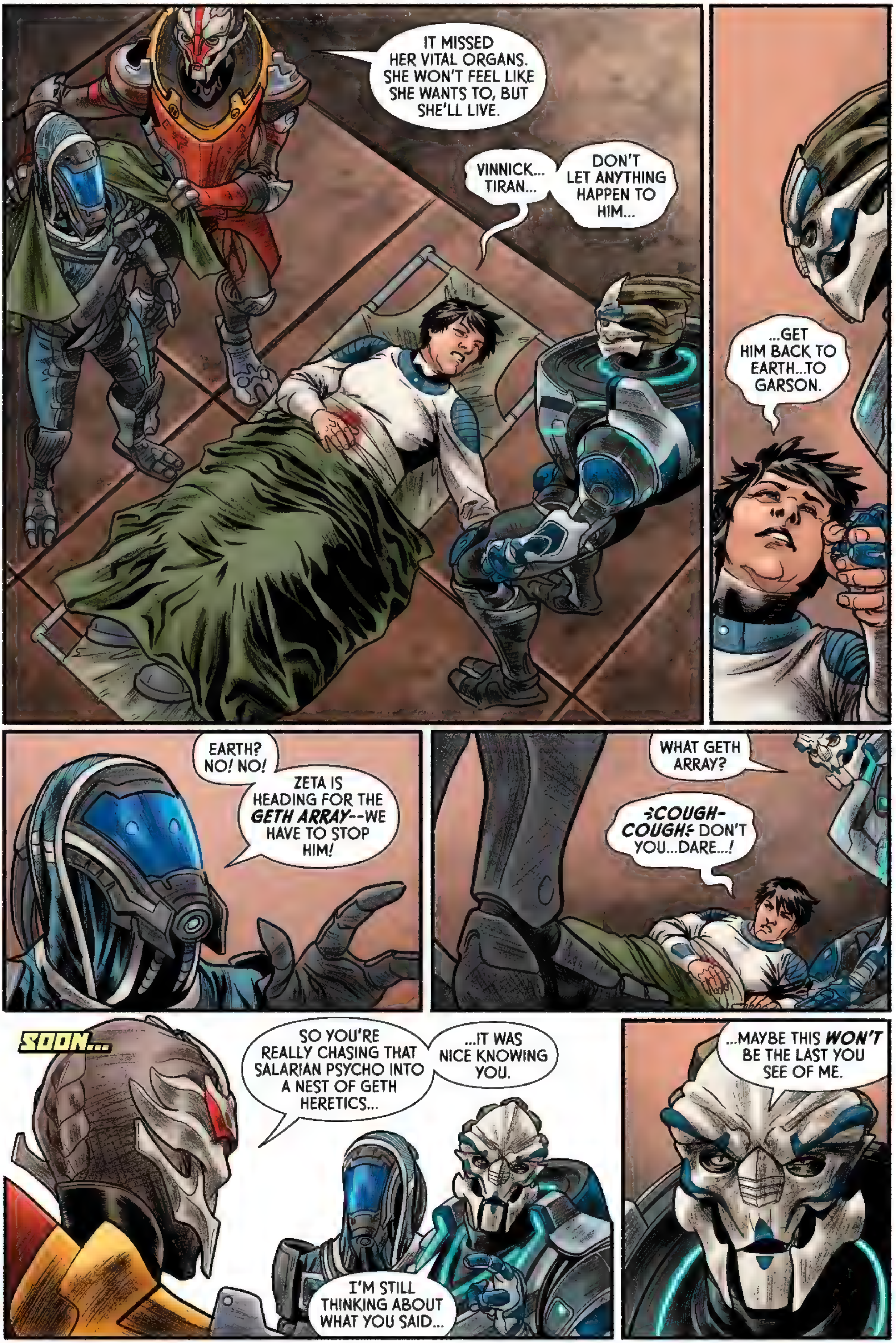

BRATATATAT
"...IT STILL MIGHT NOT BE ENOUGH."
FWOOM
BRATATAT

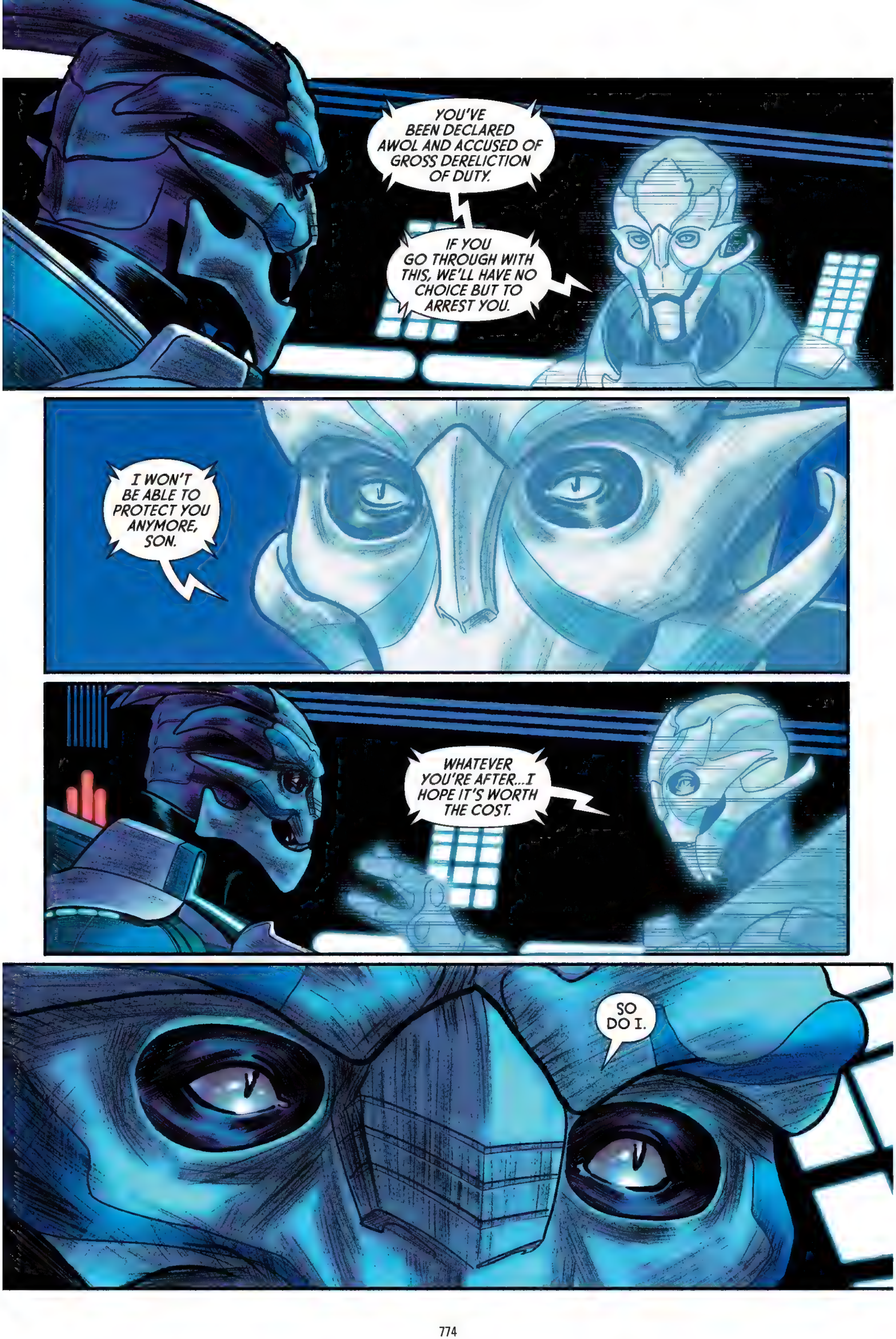

OKAY, POINT TAKEN.
THAT'S SHIO BEHIND HIM. WE HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO SEPARATE THEM.
IT WON'T BE LIKE BEFORE...
FZZZAK
...ZETA'S NOT JUST DEALING WITH A BUNCH OF CIVILIAN MINERS THIS TIME.
WE'LL GET HIS ATTENTION.
YOU BE READY TO GRAB SHIO.
JUST GET ME AN OPENING.

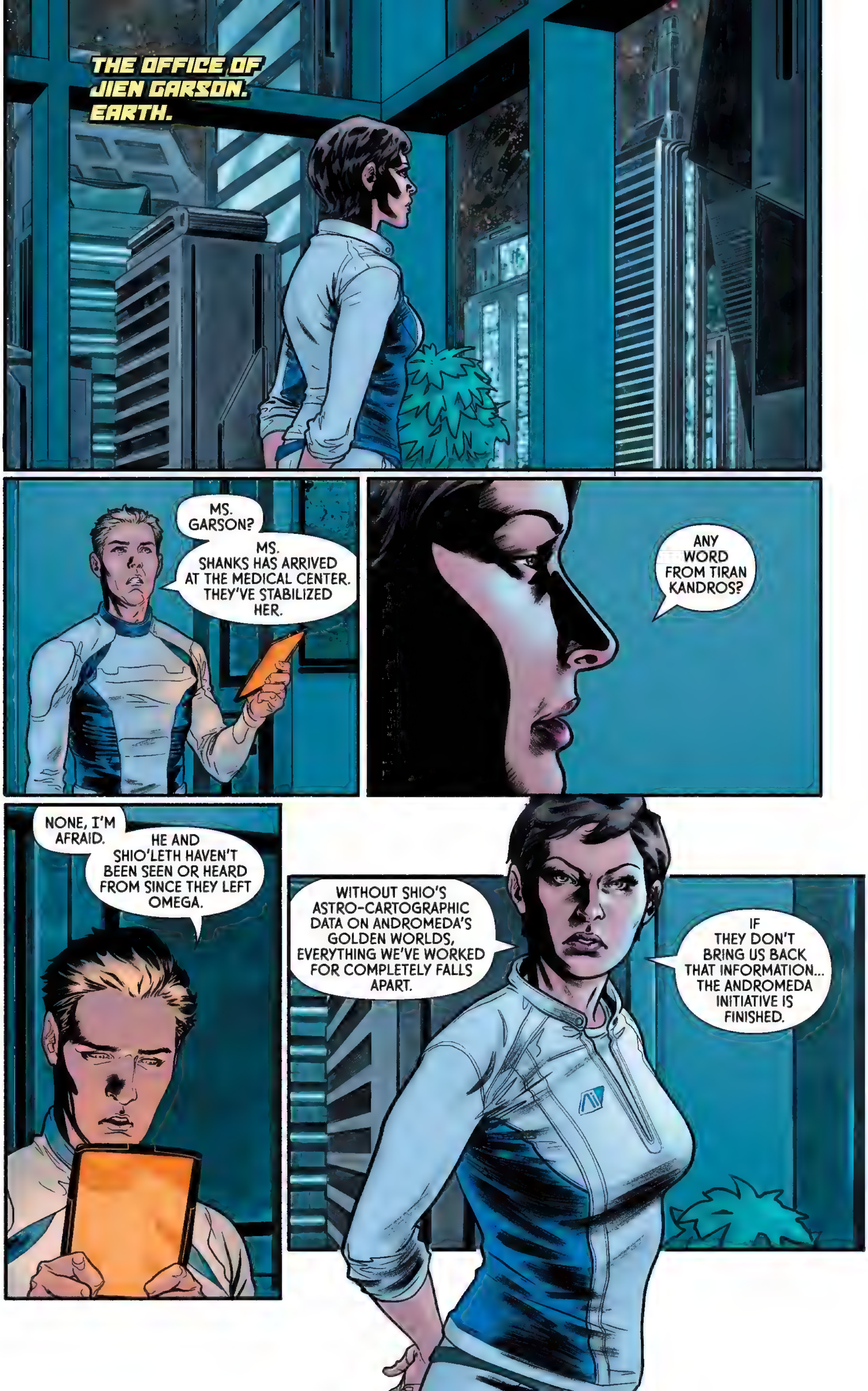

KAZRRK
YOU *PULL*, I'LL *THROW*.
DON'T HIT THE QUARIAN.
THOOM
krunch
NNGGAHH!
KA-ZERK
COME ON!

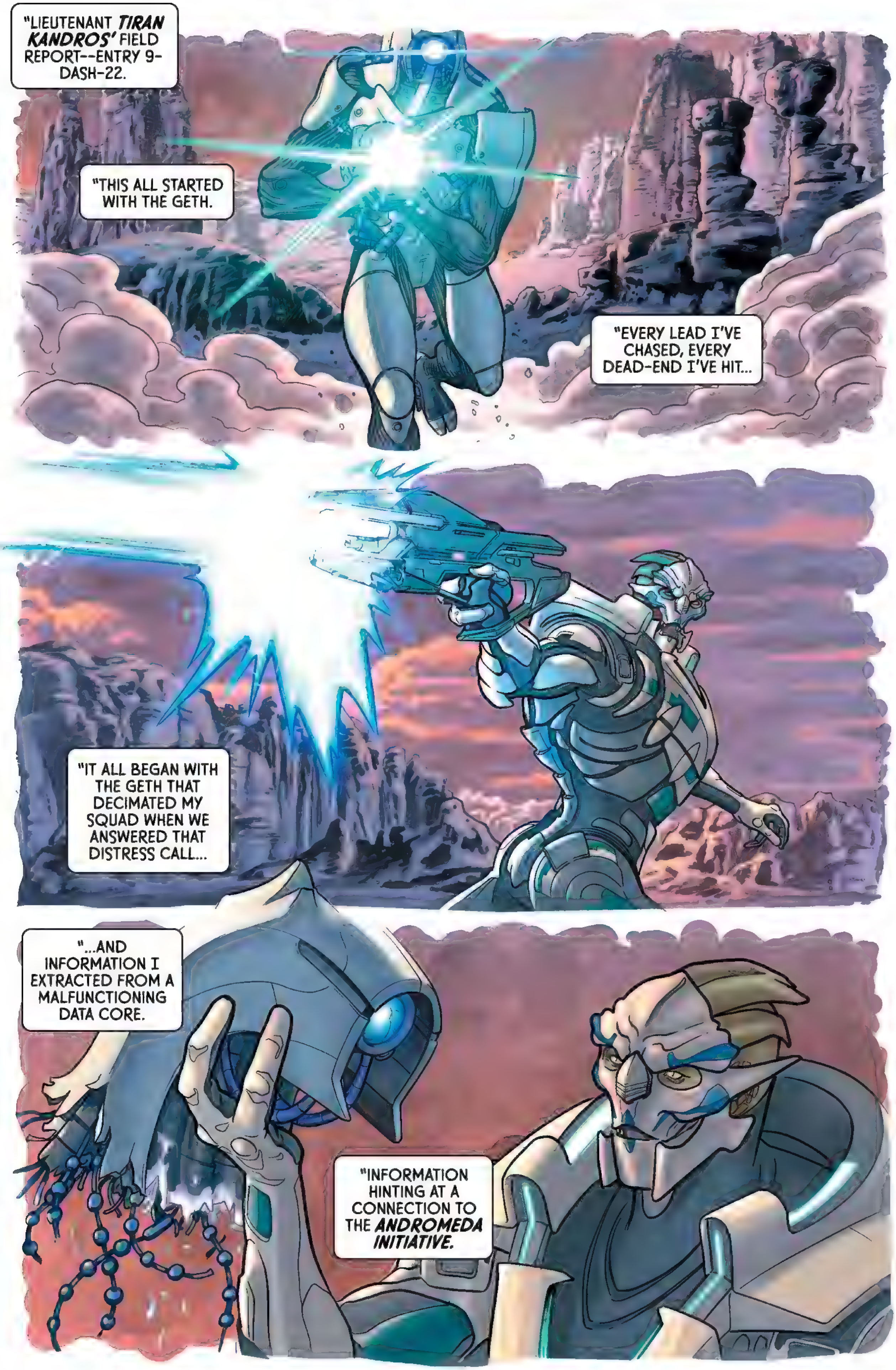

YOU'RE ALWAYS *TAKING FROM ME!* HOW MUCH IS *ENOUGH?!*
GAH!
SHLUK
CHA-BANG
YEEARGH!

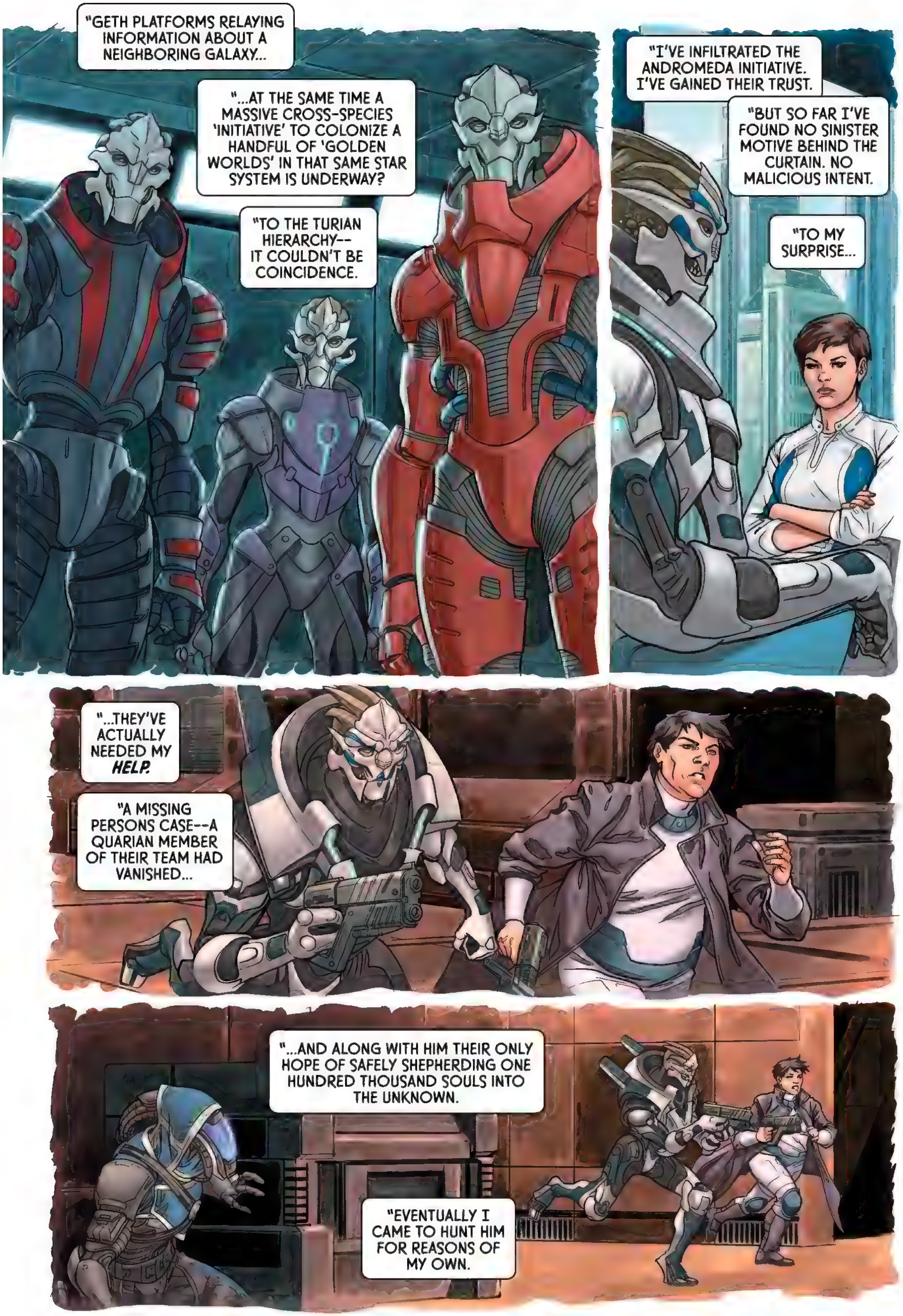

WA-WHOOMP
VIP VIP VIP
I'VE GOT YOU!
I DON'T NEED YOU! I'LL GO ALONE!
tunk

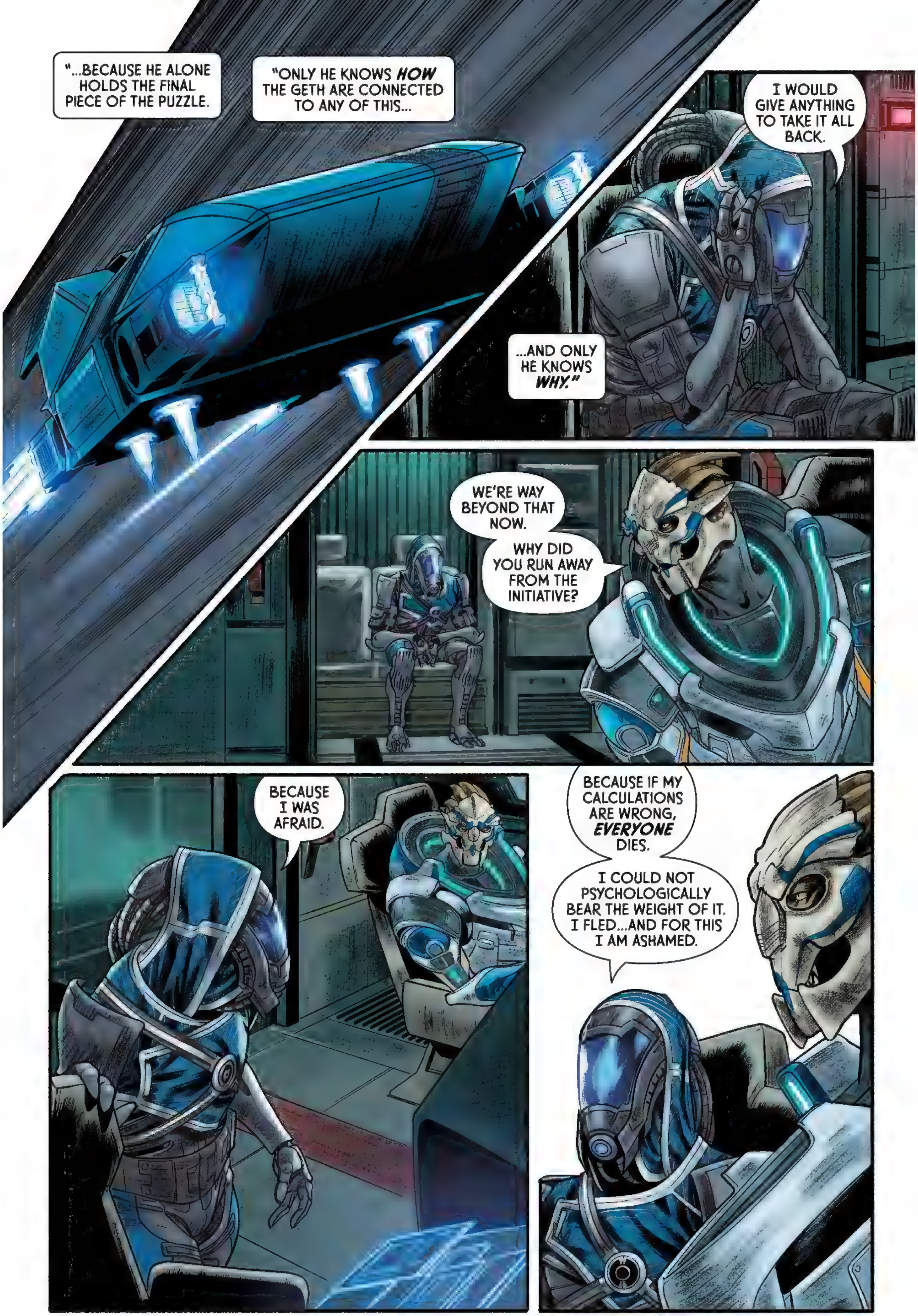

IT MISSED HER VITAL ORGANS. SHE WON'T FEEL LIKE SHE WANTS TO, BUT SHE'LL LIVE.
VINNICK... TIRAN...
DON'T LET ANYTHING HAPPEN TO HIM...
...GET HIM BACK TO EARTH...TO GARSON.
EARTH? NO! NO!
ZETA IS HEADING FOR THE *GETH ARRAY*--WE HAVE TO STOP HIM!
WHAT GETH ARRAY?
COUGH-COUGH DON'T YOU...DARE...!
SOON...
SO YOU'RE REALLY CHASING THAT SALARIAN PSYCHO INTO A NEST OF GETH HERETICS...
...IT WAS NICE KNOWING YOU.
I'M STILL THINKING ABOUT WHAT YOU SAID...
...MAYBE THIS *WON'T* BE THE LAST YOU SEE OF ME.

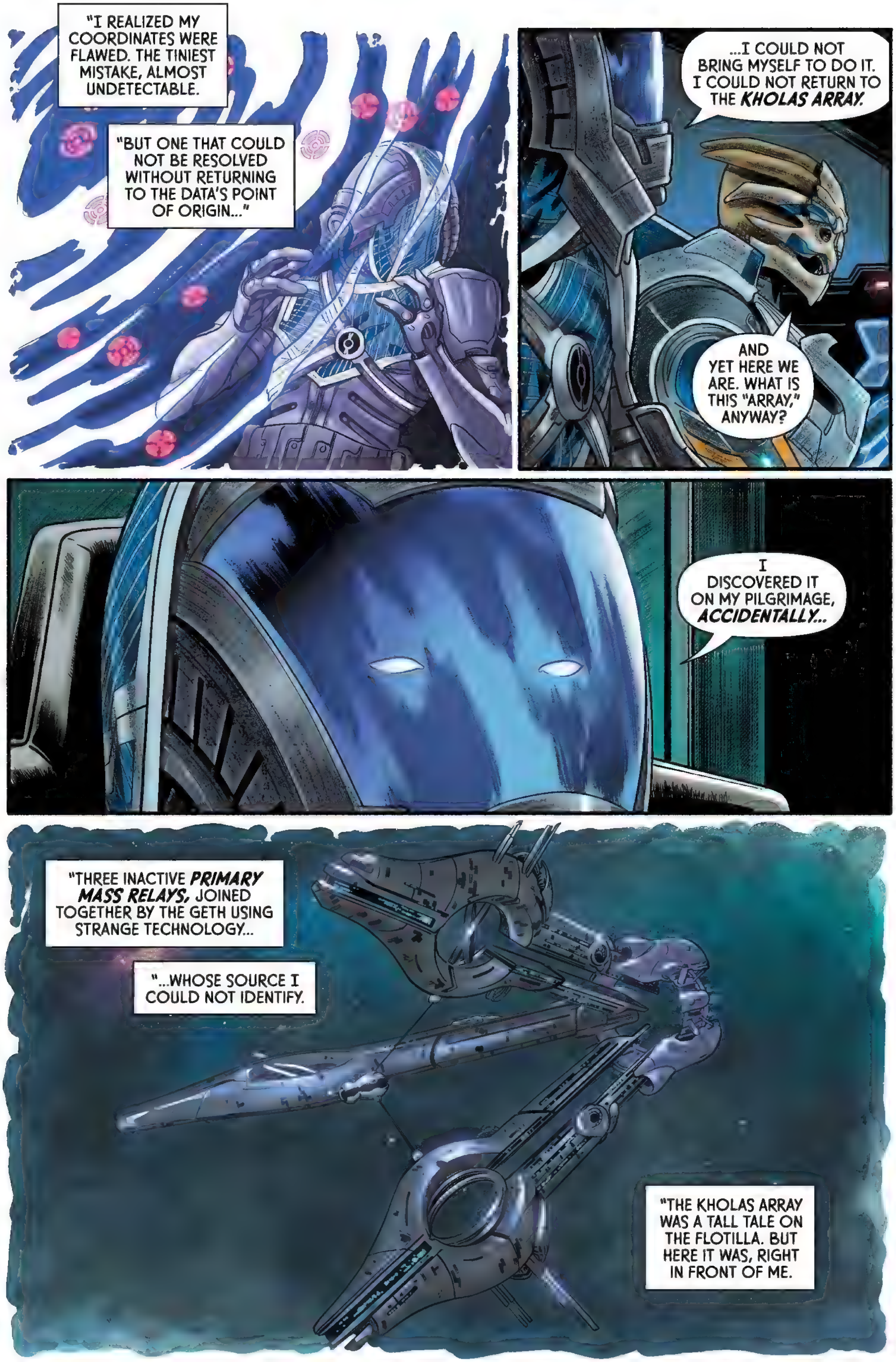

YOU'VE BEEN DECLARED AWOL AND ACCUSED OF GROSS DERELICTION OF DUTY.
IF YOU GO THROUGH WITH THIS, WE'LL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ARREST YOU.
I WON'T BE ABLE TO PROTECT YOU ANYMORE, SON.
WHATEVER YOU'RE AFTER...I HOPE IT'S WORTH THE COST.
SO DO I.

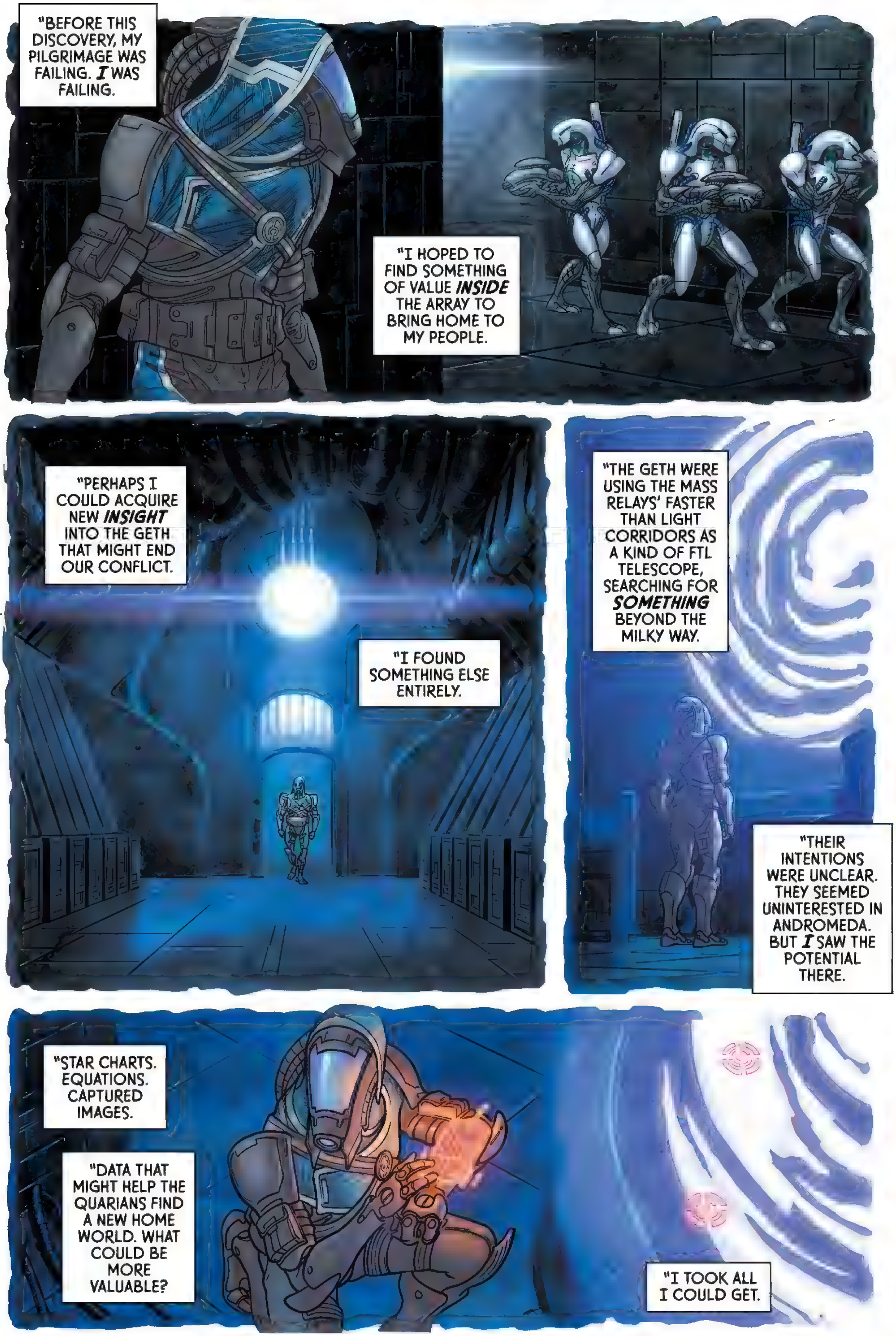

THE OFFICE OF JIEN GARSON. EARTH.
MS. GARSON?
MS. SHANKS HAS ARRIVED AT THE MEDICAL CENTER. THEY'VE STABILIZED HER.
ANY WORD FROM TIRAN KANDROS?
NONE, I'M AFRAID.
HE AND SHIO'LETH HAVEN'T BEEN SEEN OR HEARD FROM SINCE THEY LEFT OMEGA.
WITHOUT SHIO'S ASTRO-CARTOGRAPHIC DATA ON ANDROMEDA'S GOLDEN WORLDS, EVERYTHING WE'VE WORKED FOR COMPLETELY FALLS APART.
IF THEY DON'T BRING US BACK THAT INFORMATION... THE ANDROMEDA INITIATIVE IS FINISHED.

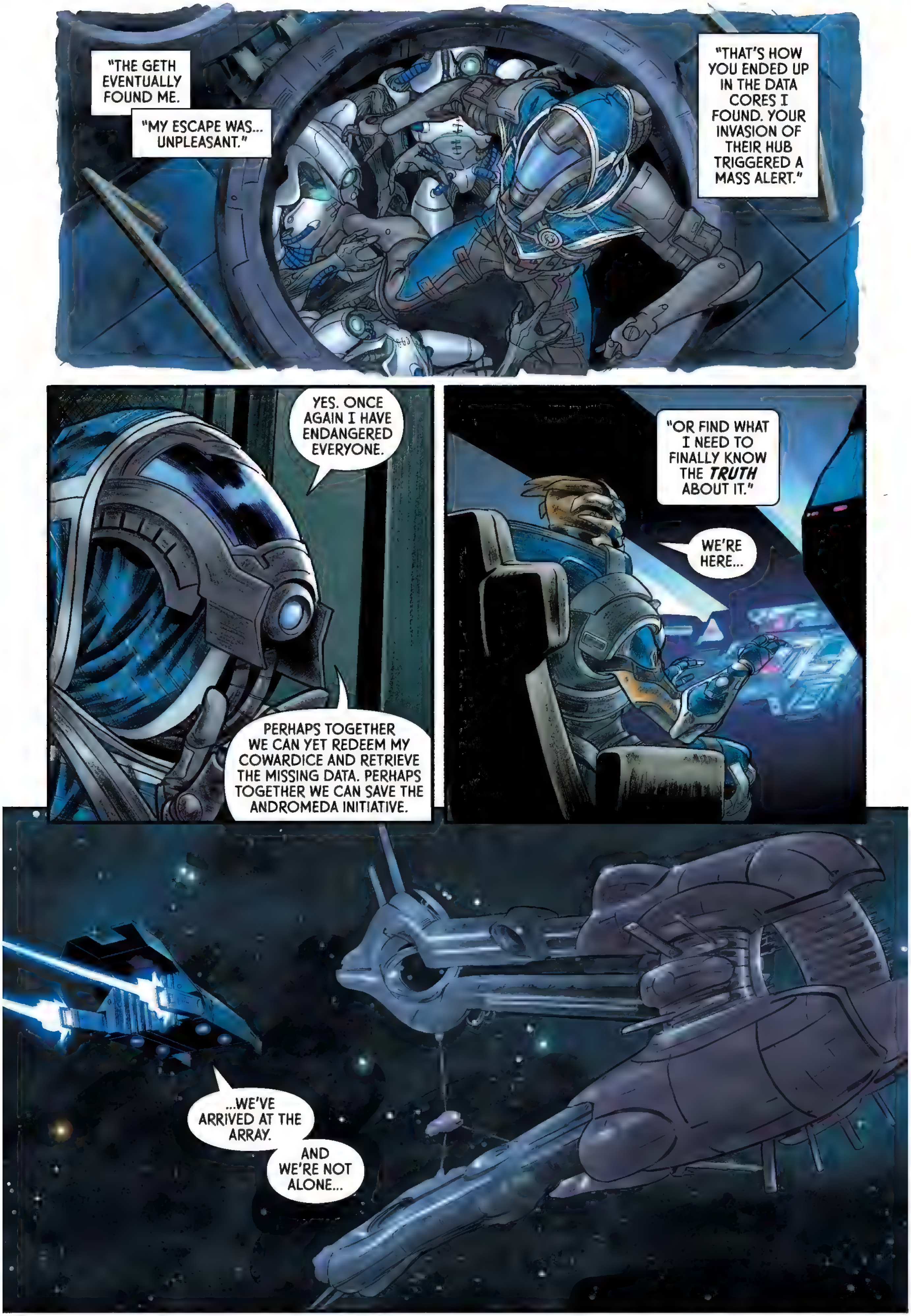

"LIEUTENANT ***TIRAN KANDROS'*** FIELD REPORT--ENTRY 9-DASH-22.
"THIS ALL STARTED WITH THE GETH.
"EVERY LEAD I'VE CHASED, EVERY DEAD-END I'VE HIT...
"IT ALL BEGAN WITH THE GETH THAT DECIMATED MY SQUAD WHEN WE ANSWERED THAT DISTRESS CALL...
"...AND INFORMATION I EXTRACTED FROM A MALFUNCTIONING DATA CORE.
"INFORMATION HINTING AT A CONNECTION TO THE ***ANDROMEDA INITIATIVE.***

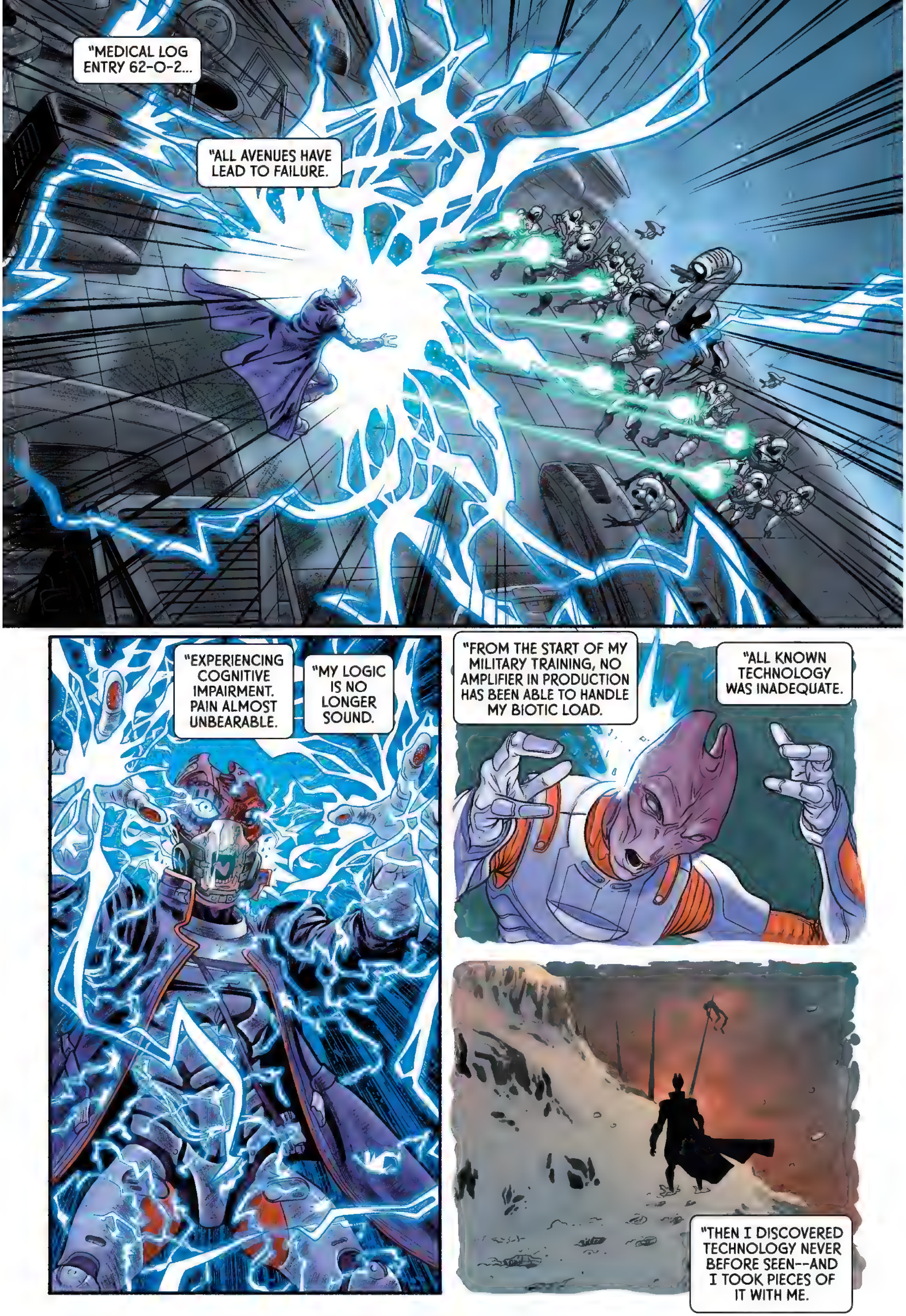

"GETH PLATFORMS RELAYING INFORMATION ABOUT A NEIGHBORING GALAXY...
"...AT THE SAME TIME A MASSIVE CROSS-SPECIES 'INITIATIVE' TO COLONIZE A HANDFUL OF 'GOLDEN WORLDS' IN THAT SAME STAR SYSTEM IS UNDERWAY?
"TO THE TURIAN HIERARCHY-- IT COULDN'T BE COINCIDENCE.
"I'VE INFILTRATED THE ANDROMEDA INITIATIVE. I'VE GAINED THEIR TRUST.
"BUT SO FAR I'VE FOUND NO SINISTER MOTIVE BEHIND THE CURTAIN. NO MALICIOUS INTENT.
"TO MY SURPRISE...
"...THEY'VE ACTUALLY NEEDED MY *HELP*.
"A MISSING PERSONS CASE--A QUARIAN MEMBER OF THEIR TEAM HAD VANISHED...
"...AND ALONG WITH HIM THEIR ONLY HOPE OF SAFELY SHEPHERDING ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND SOULS INTO THE UNKNOWN.
"EVENTUALLY I CAME TO HUNT HIM FOR REASONS OF MY OWN.

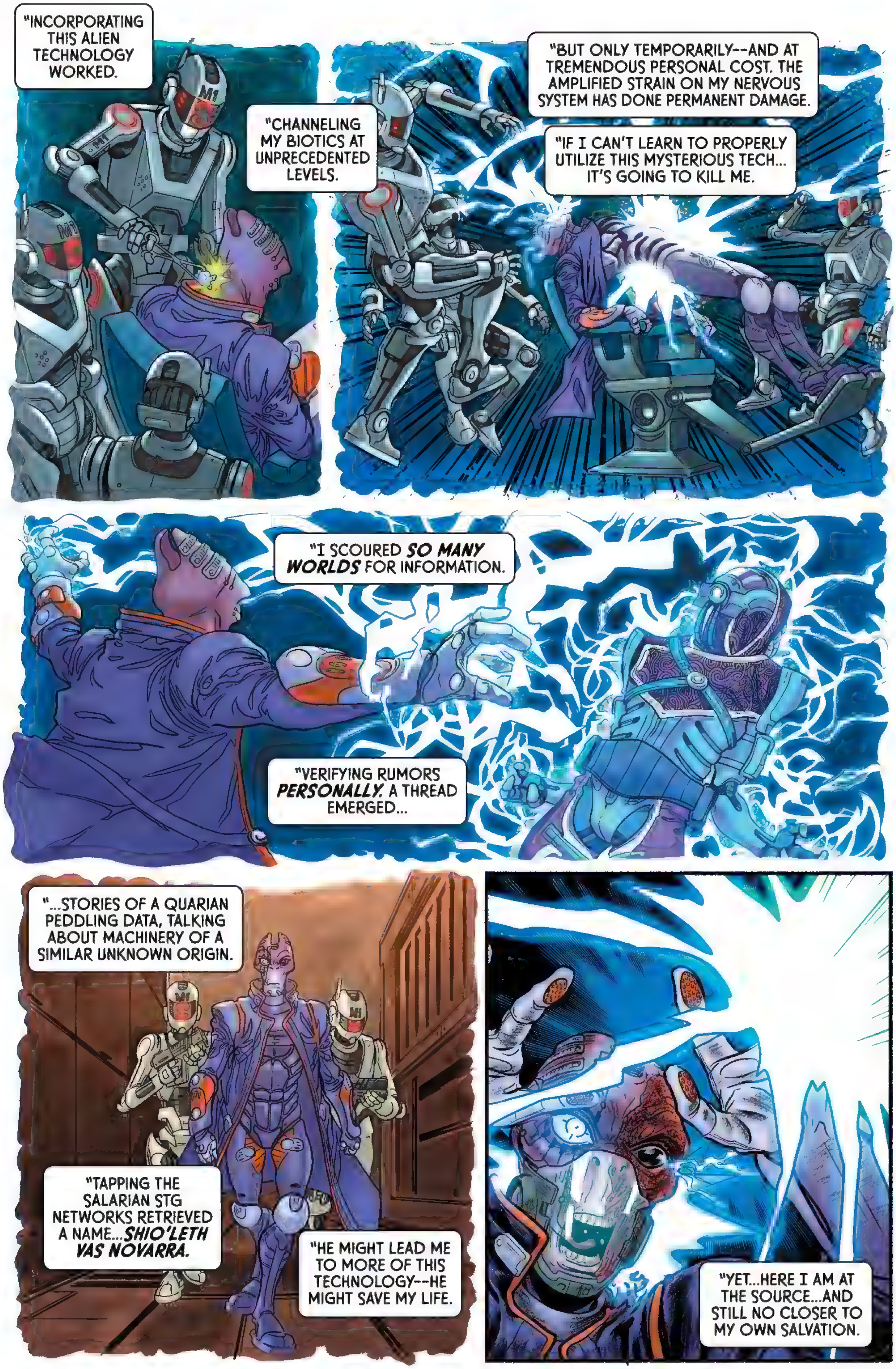

"...BECAUSE HE ALONE HOLDS THE FINAL PIECE OF THE PUZZLE.
"ONLY HE KNOWS *HOW* THE GETH ARE CONNECTED TO ANY OF THIS...
I WOULD GIVE ANYTHING TO TAKE IT ALL BACK.
...AND ONLY HE KNOWS *WHY.*"
WE'RE WAY BEYOND THAT NOW.
WHY DID YOU RUN AWAY FROM THE INITIATIVE?
BECAUSE I WAS AFRAID.
BECAUSE IF MY CALCULATIONS ARE WRONG, *EVERYONE* DIES.
I COULD NOT PSYCHOLOGICALLY BEAR THE WEIGHT OF IT. I FLED...AND FOR THIS I AM ASHAMED.

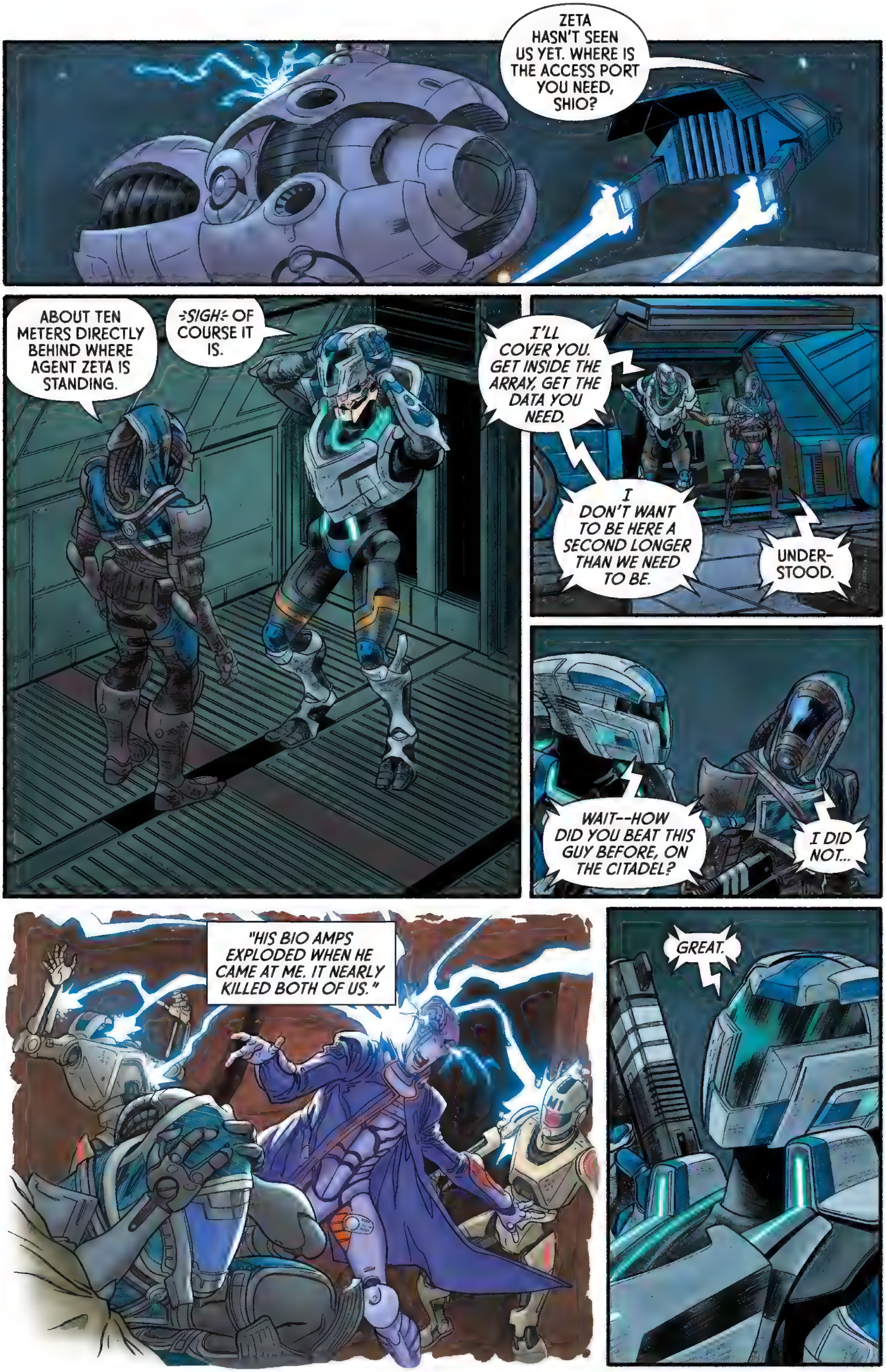

"I REALIZED MY COORDINATES WERE FLAWED. THE TINIEST MISTAKE, ALMOST UNDETECTABLE.
"BUT ONE THAT COULD NOT BE RESOLVED WITHOUT RETURNING TO THE DATA'S POINT OF ORIGIN..."
...I COULD NOT BRING MYSELF TO DO IT. I COULD NOT RETURN TO THE ***KHOLAS ARRAY.***
AND YET HERE WE ARE. WHAT IS THIS "ARRAY," ANYWAY?
I DISCOVERED IT ON MY PILGRIMAGE, ***ACCIDENTALLY...***
"THREE INACTIVE ***PRIMARY MASS RELAYS,*** JOINED TOGETHER BY THE GETH USING STRANGE TECHNOLOGY...
"...WHOSE SOURCE I COULD NOT IDENTIFY.
"THE KHOLAS ARRAY WAS A TALL TALE ON THE FLOTILLA. BUT HERE IT WAS, RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME.

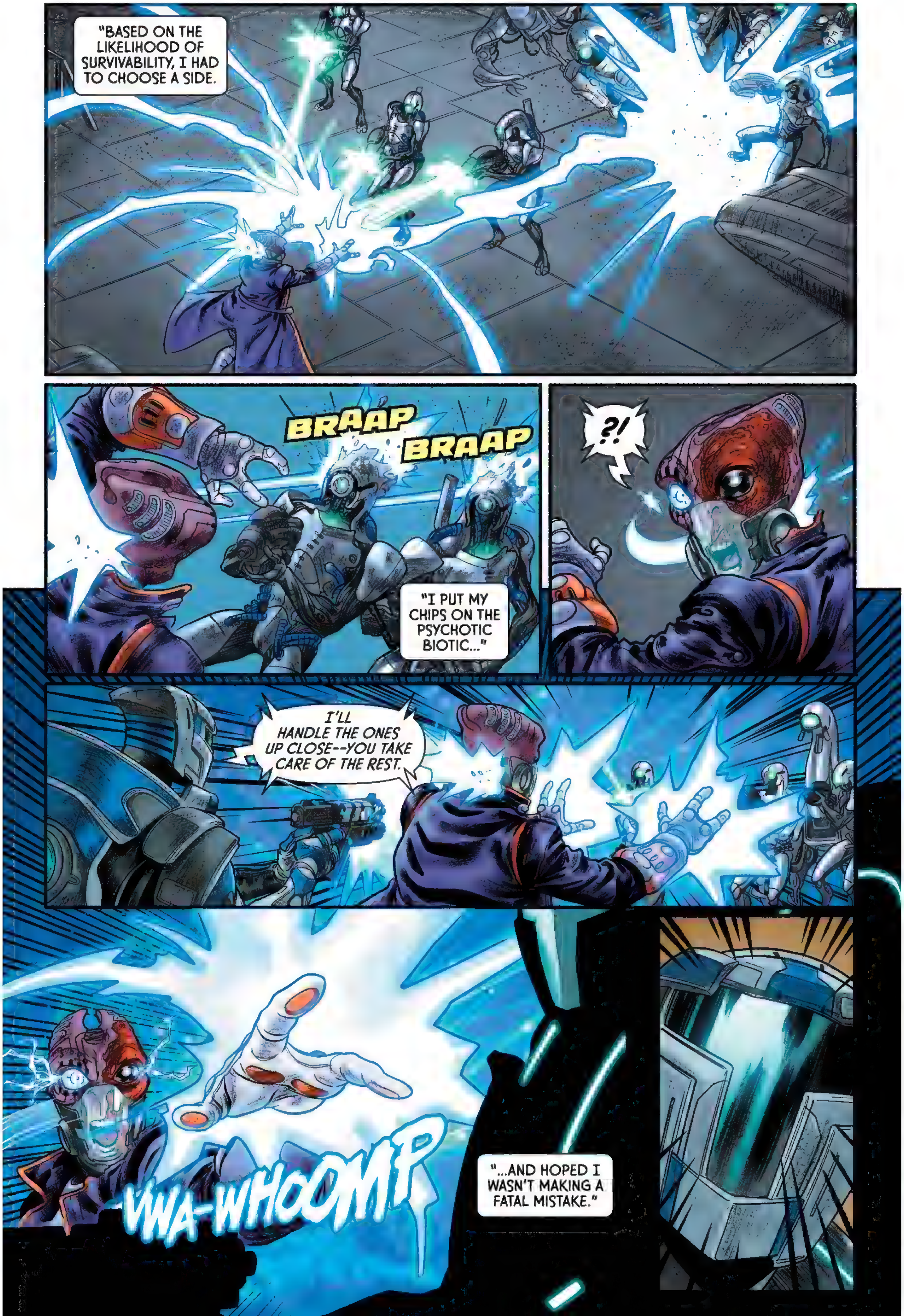

"BEFORE THIS DISCOVERY, MY PILGRIMAGE WAS FAILING. *I* WAS FAILING.
"I HOPED TO FIND SOMETHING OF VALUE ***INSIDE*** THE ARRAY TO BRING HOME TO MY PEOPLE.
"PERHAPS I COULD ACQUIRE NEW ***INSIGHT*** INTO THE GETH THAT MIGHT END OUR CONFLICT.
"I FOUND SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY.
"THE GETH WERE USING THE MASS RELAYS' FASTER THAN LIGHT CORRIDORS AS A KIND OF FTL TELESCOPE, SEARCHING FOR ***SOMETHING*** BEYOND THE MILKY WAY.
"THEIR INTENTIONS WERE UNCLEAR. THEY SEEMED UNINTERESTED IN ANDROMEDA. BUT *I* SAW THE POTENTIAL THERE.
"STAR CHARTS. EQUATIONS. CAPTURED IMAGES.
"DATA THAT MIGHT HELP THE QUARIANS FIND A NEW HOME WORLD. WHAT COULD BE MORE VALUABLE?
"I TOOK ALL I COULD GET.

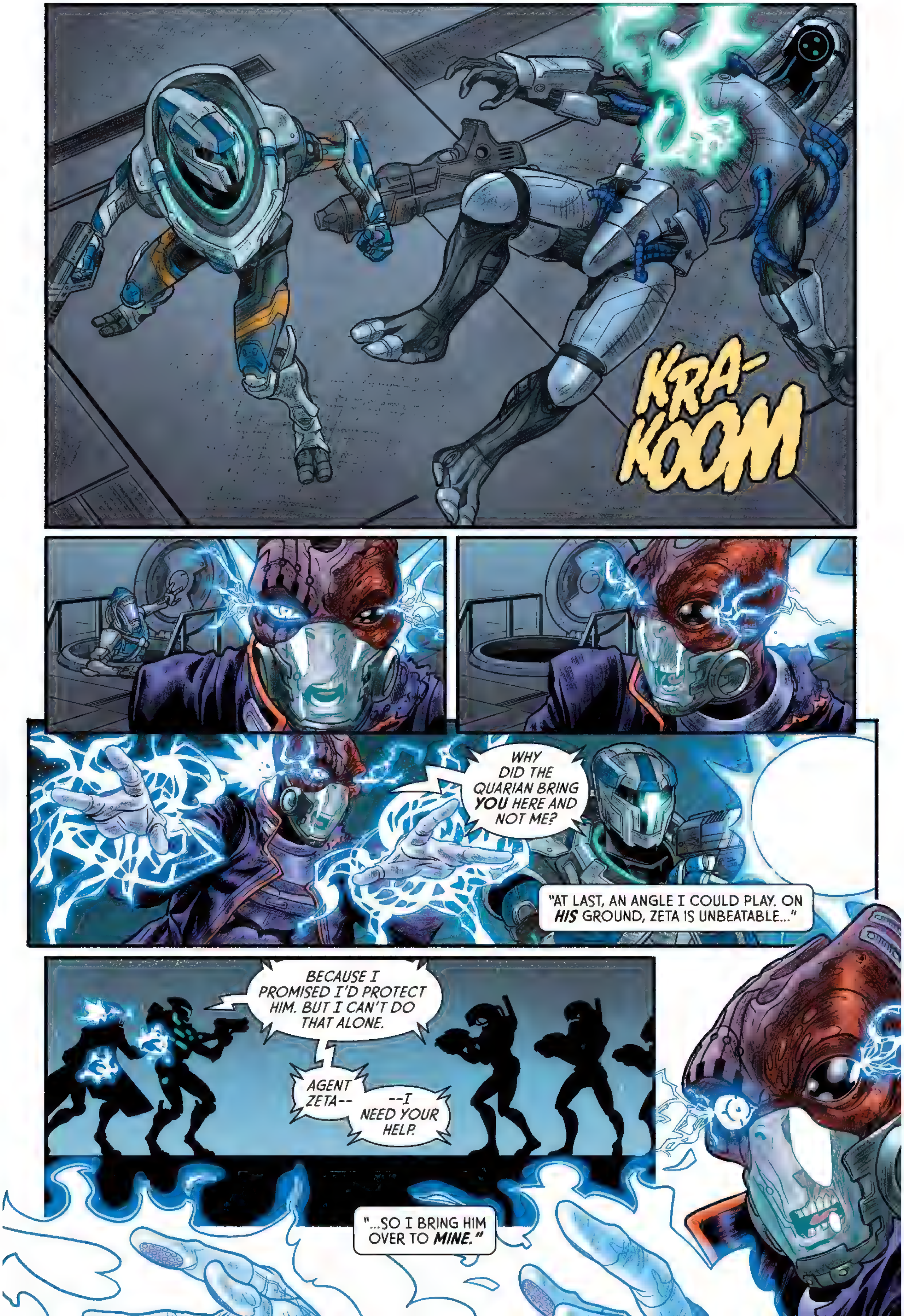

"THE GETH EVENTUALLY FOUND ME.
"MY ESCAPE WAS... UNPLEASANT."
"THAT'S HOW YOU ENDED UP IN THE DATA CORES I FOUND. YOUR INVASION OF THEIR HUB TRIGGERED A MASS ALERT."
YES. ONCE AGAIN I HAVE ENDANGERED EVERYONE.
PERHAPS TOGETHER WE CAN YET REDEEM MY COWARDICE AND RETRIEVE THE MISSING DATA. PERHAPS TOGETHER WE CAN SAVE THE ANDROMEDA INITIATIVE.
"OR FIND WHAT I NEED TO FINALLY KNOW THE ***TRUTH*** ABOUT IT."
WE'RE HERE...
...WE'VE ARRIVED AT THE ARRAY.
AND WE'RE NOT ALONE...

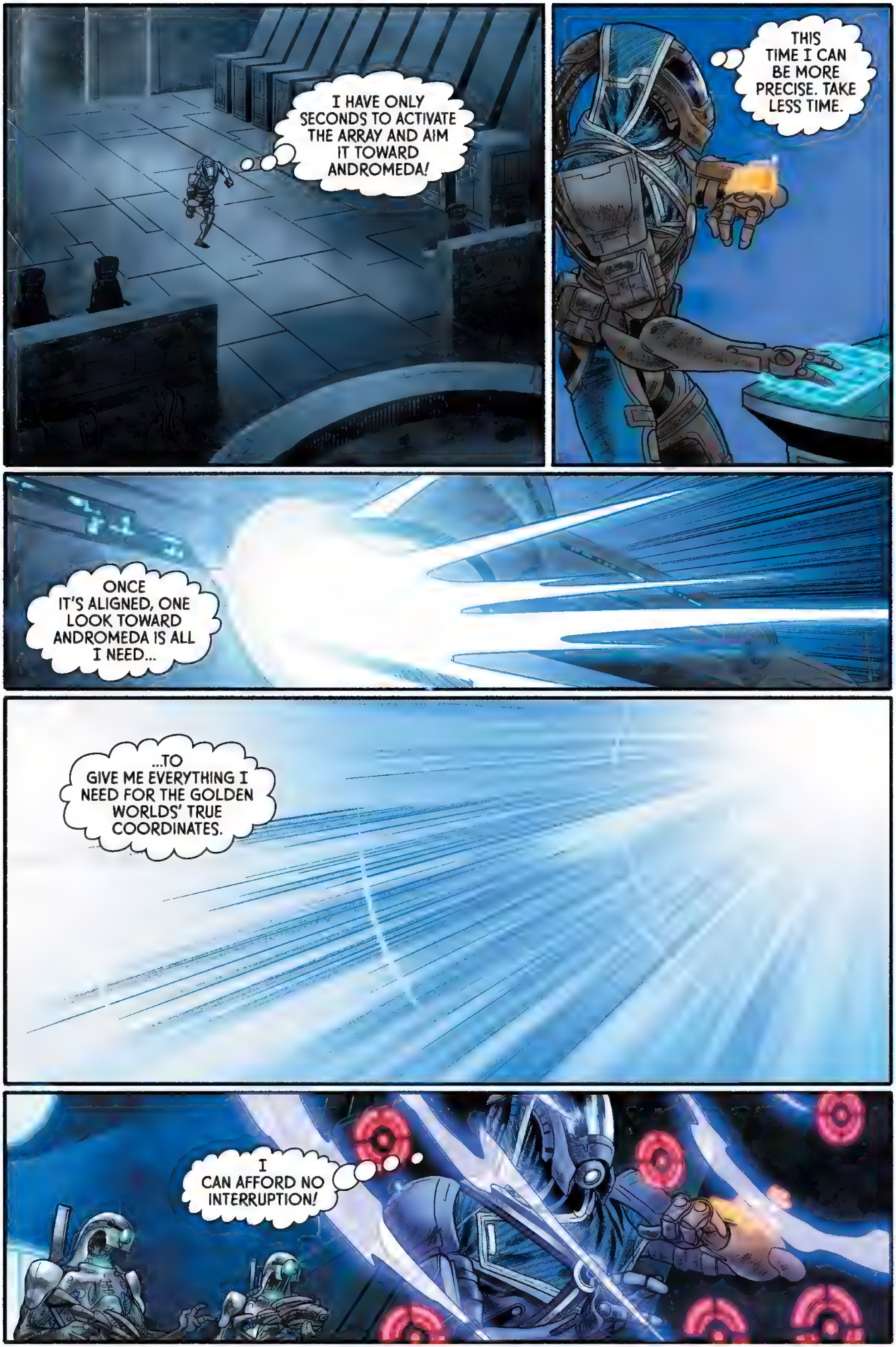

"MEDICAL LOG ENTRY 62-O-2...
"ALL AVENUES HAVE LEAD TO FAILURE.
"EXPERIENCING COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT. PAIN ALMOST UNBEARABLE.
"MY LOGIC IS NO LONGER SOUND.
"FROM THE START OF MY MILITARY TRAINING, NO AMPLIFIER IN PRODUCTION HAS BEEN ABLE TO HANDLE MY BIOTIC LOAD.
"ALL KNOWN TECHNOLOGY WAS INADEQUATE.
"THEN I DISCOVERED TECHNOLOGY NEVER BEFORE SEEN--AND I TOOK PIECES OF IT WITH ME.

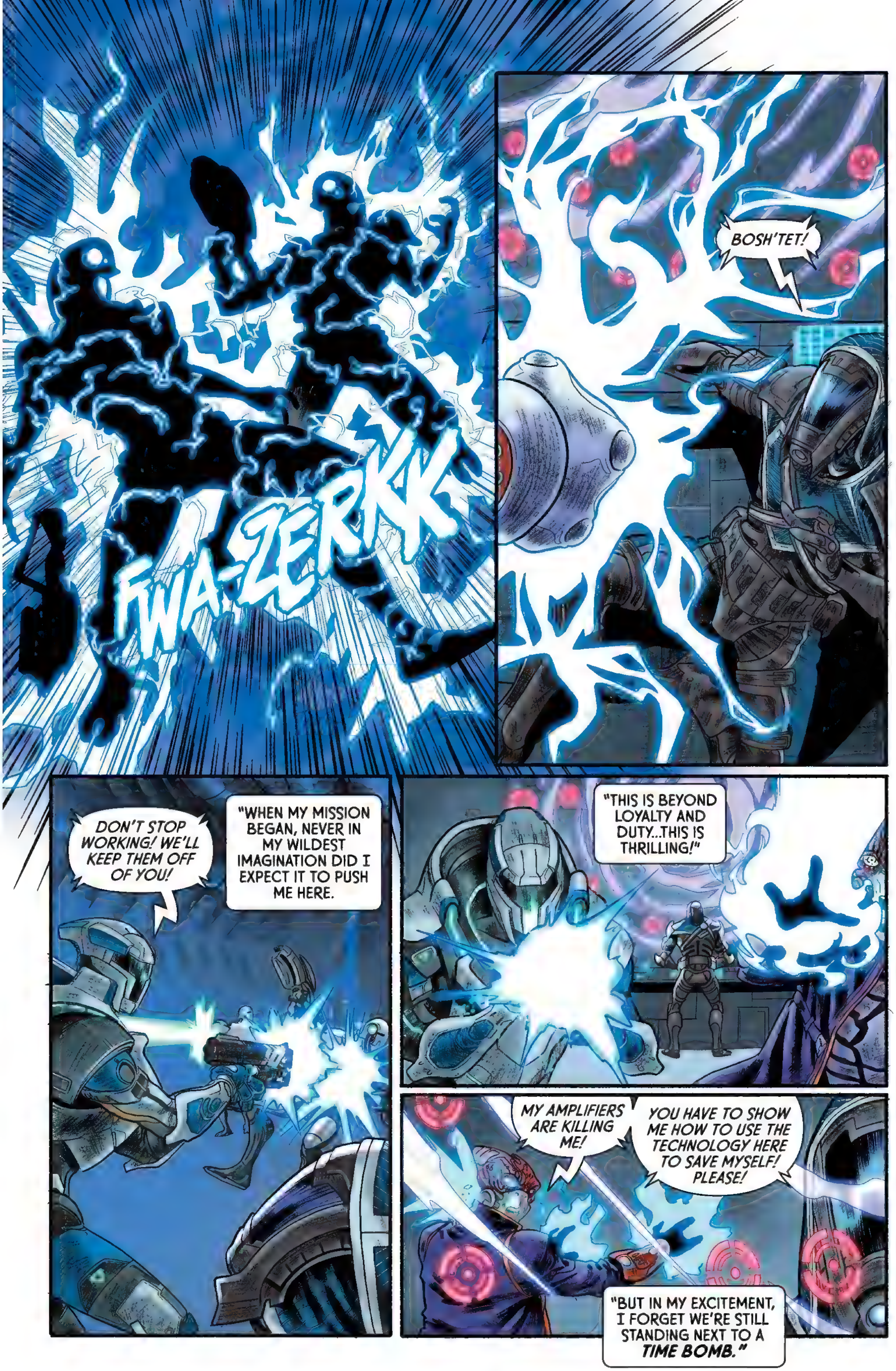

"INCORPORATING THIS ALIEN TECHNOLOGY WORKED.
"CHANNELING MY BIOTICS AT UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS.
M1
"BUT ONLY TEMPORARILY--AND AT TREMENDOUS PERSONAL COST. THE AMPLIFIED STRAIN ON MY NERVOUS SYSTEM HAS DONE PERMANENT DAMAGE.
"IF I CAN'T LEARN TO PROPERLY UTILIZE THIS MYSTERIOUS TECH... IT'S GOING TO KILL ME.
"I SCOURED **SO MANY WORLDS** FOR INFORMATION.
"VERIFYING RUMORS **PERSONALLY.** A THREAD EMERGED...
"...STORIES OF A QUARIAN PEDDLING DATA, TALKING ABOUT MACHINERY OF A SIMILAR UNKNOWN ORIGIN.
"TAPPING THE SALARIAN STG NETWORKS RETRIEVED A NAME...**SHIO'LETH VAS NOVARRA.**
"HE MIGHT LEAD ME TO MORE OF THIS TECHNOLOGY--HE MIGHT SAVE MY LIFE.
"YET...HERE I AM AT THE SOURCE...AND STILL NO CLOSER TO MY OWN SALVATION.

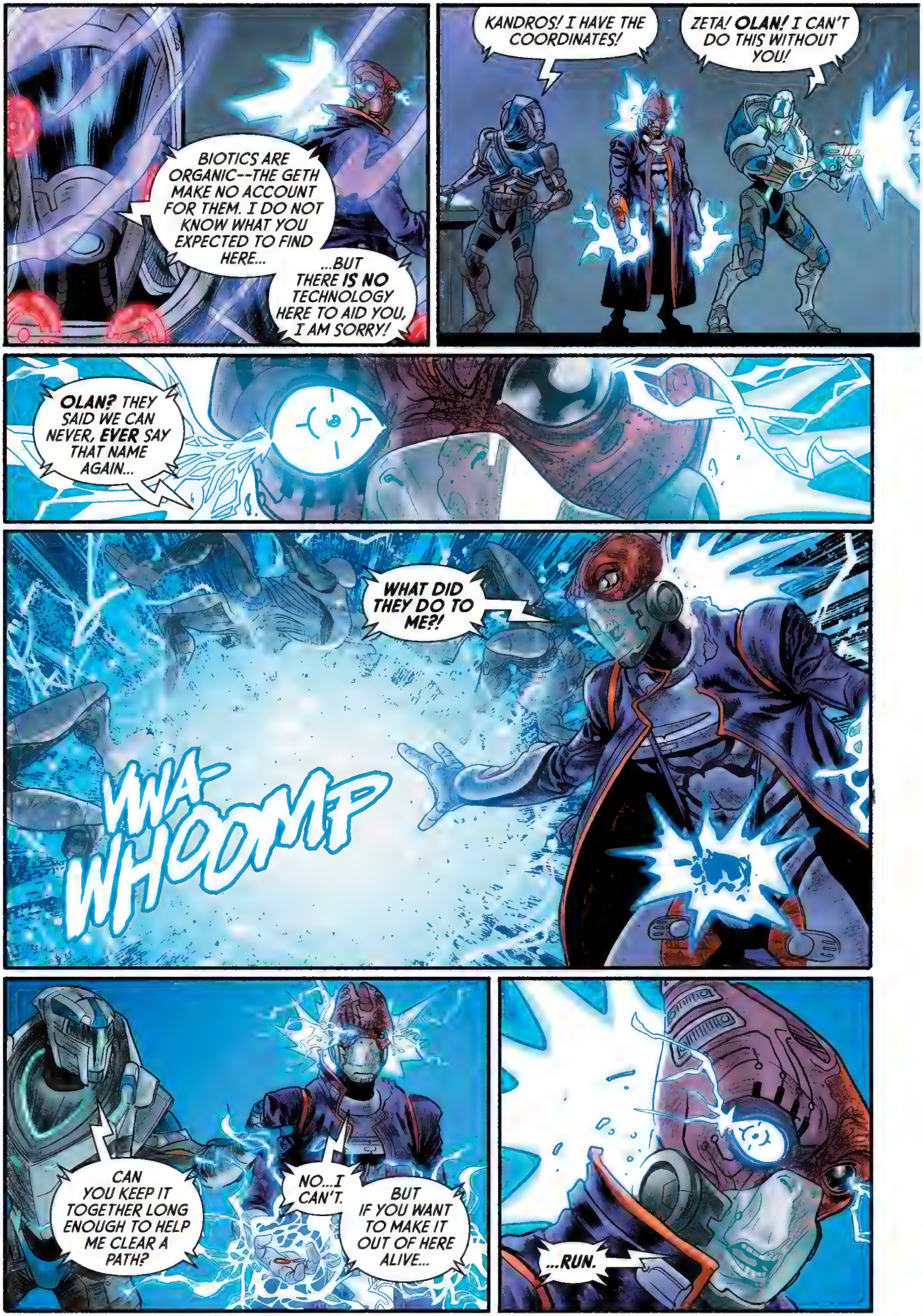

ZETA HASN'T SEEN US YET. WHERE IS THE ACCESS PORT YOU NEED, SHIO?
ABOUT TEN METERS DIRECTLY BEHIND WHERE AGENT ZETA IS STANDING.
⫶SIGH⫶ OF COURSE IT IS.
I'LL COVER YOU. GET INSIDE THE ARRAY, GET THE DATA YOU NEED.
I DON'T WANT TO BE HERE A SECOND LONGER THAN WE NEED TO BE.
UNDER-STOOD.
WAIT--HOW DID YOU BEAT THIS GUY BEFORE, ON THE CITADEL?
I DID NOT...
"HIS BIO AMPS EXPLODED WHEN HE CAME AT ME. IT NEARLY KILLED BOTH OF US."
GREAT.

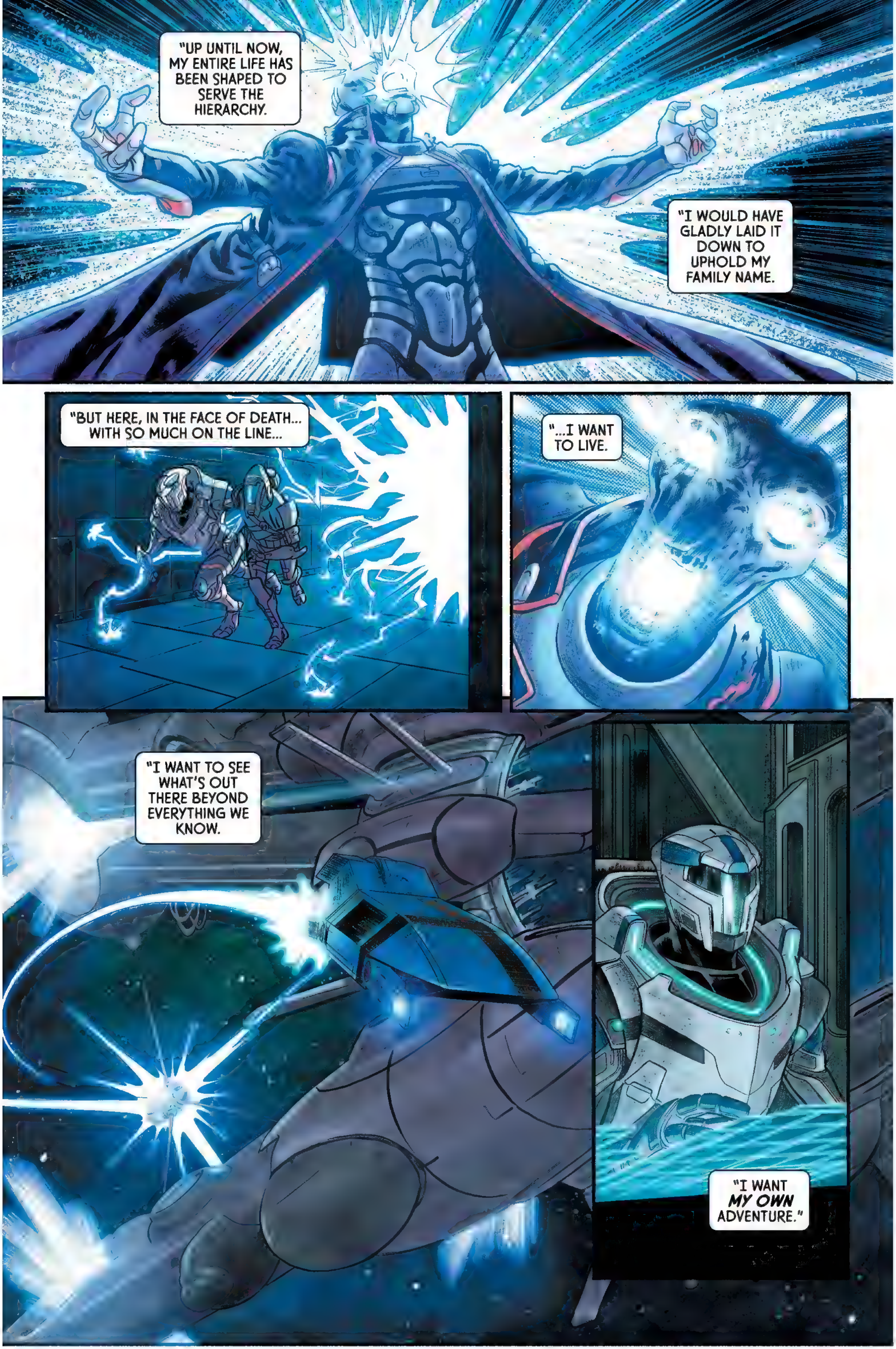

"BASED ON THE LIKELIHOOD OF SURVIVABILITY, I HAD TO CHOOSE A SIDE.
BRAAP
BRAAP
"I PUT MY CHIPS ON THE PSYCHOTIC BIOTIC..."
?!
I'LL HANDLE THE ONES UP CLOSE--YOU TAKE CARE OF THE REST.
VWA-WHOOMP
"...AND HOPED I WASN'T MAKING A FATAL MISTAKE."

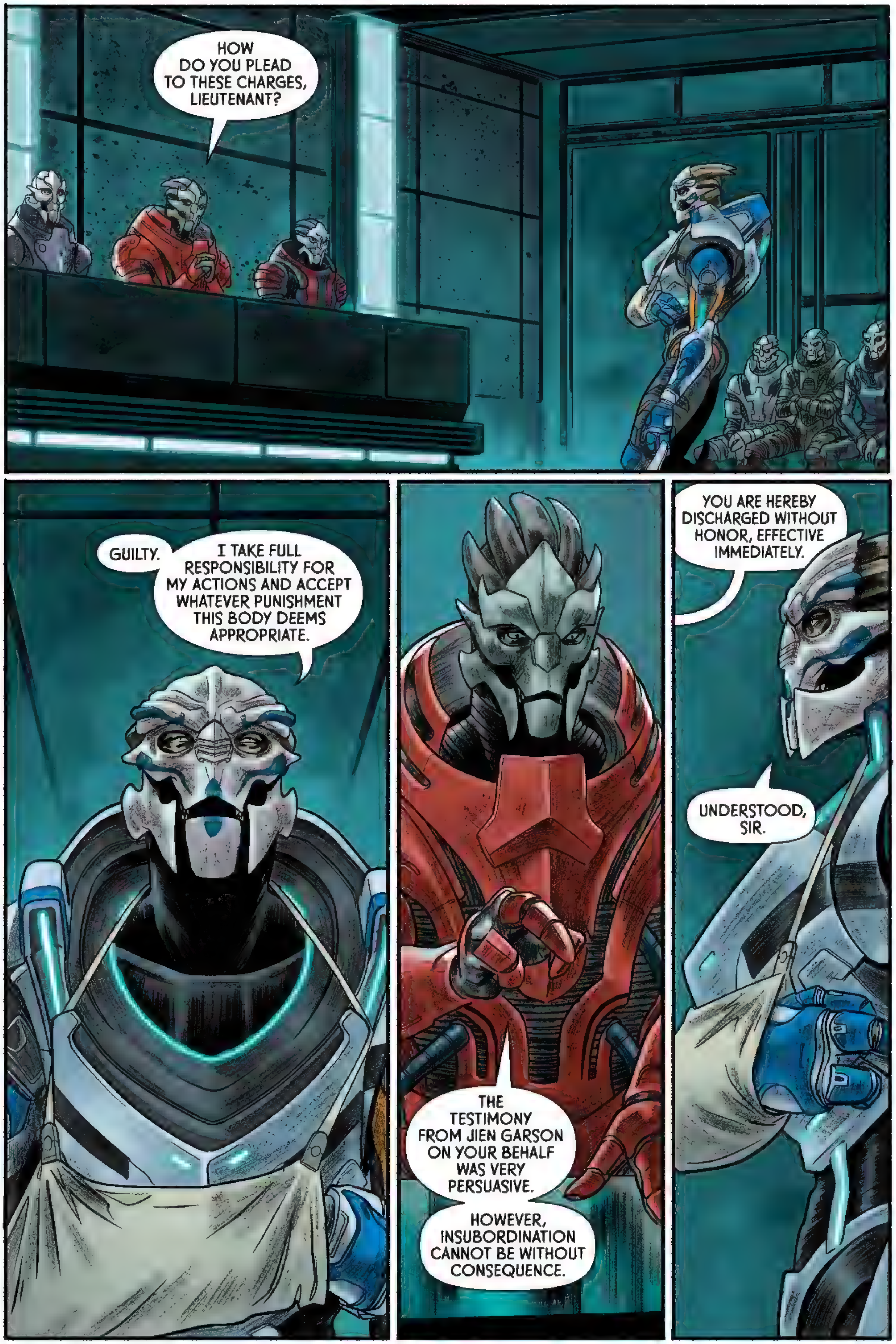

KRA-KOOM
WHY DID THE QUARIAN BRING **YOU** HERE AND NOT ME?
"AT LAST, AN ANGLE I COULD PLAY. ON **HIS** GROUND, ZETA IS UNBEATABLE..."
BECAUSE I PROMISED I'D PROTECT HIM. BUT I CAN'T DO THAT ALONE.
AGENT ZETA--
--I NEED YOUR HELP.
"...SO I BRING HIM OVER TO **MINE.**"

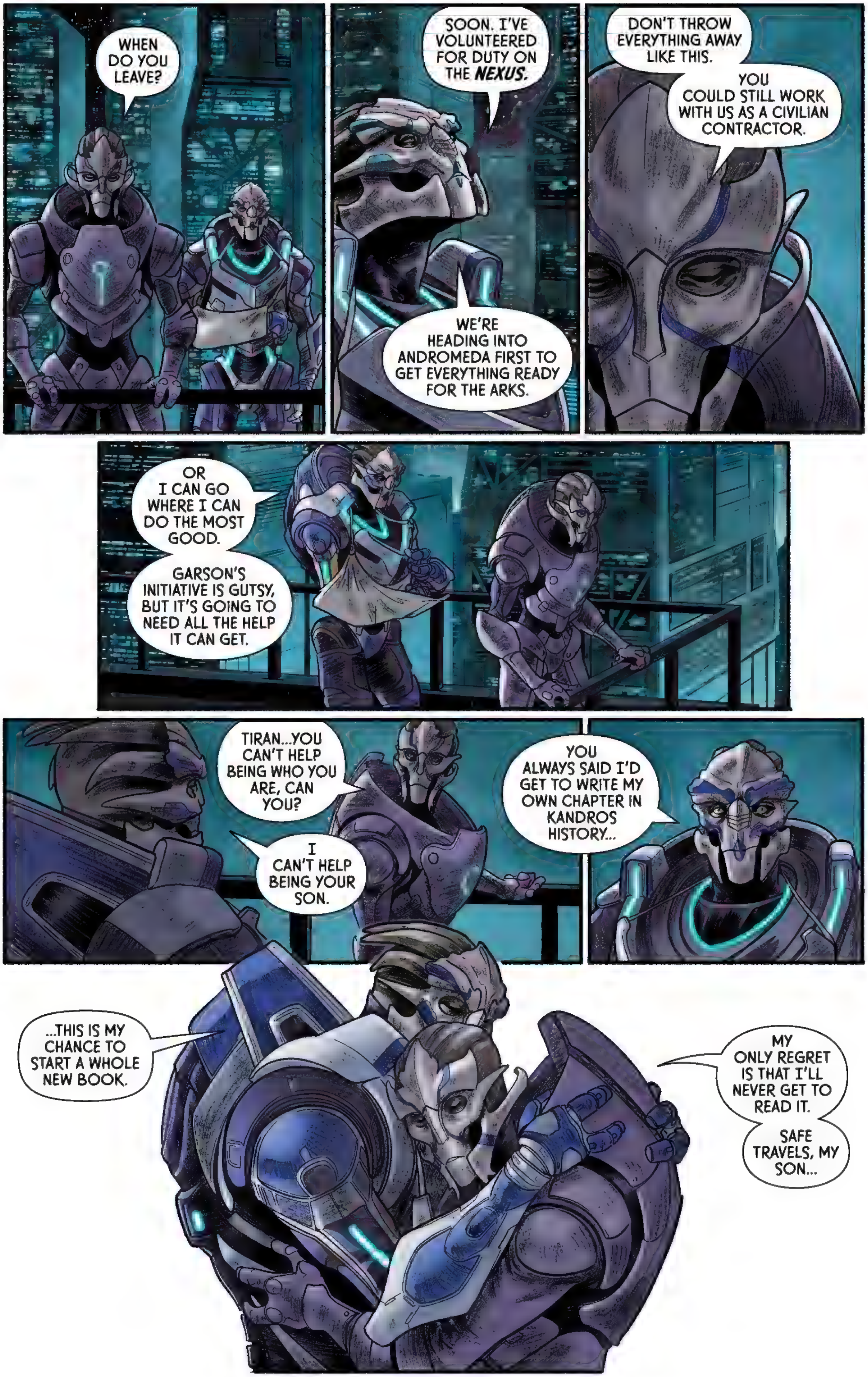

I HAVE ONLY SECONDS TO ACTIVATE THE ARRAY AND AIM IT TOWARD ANDROMEDA!
THIS TIME I CAN BE MORE PRECISE. TAKE LESS TIME.
ONCE IT'S ALIGNED, ONE LOOK TOWARD ANDROMEDA IS ALL I NEED...
...TO GIVE ME EVERYTHING I NEED FOR THE GOLDEN WORLDS' TRUE COORDINATES.
I CAN AFFORD NO INTERRUPTION!

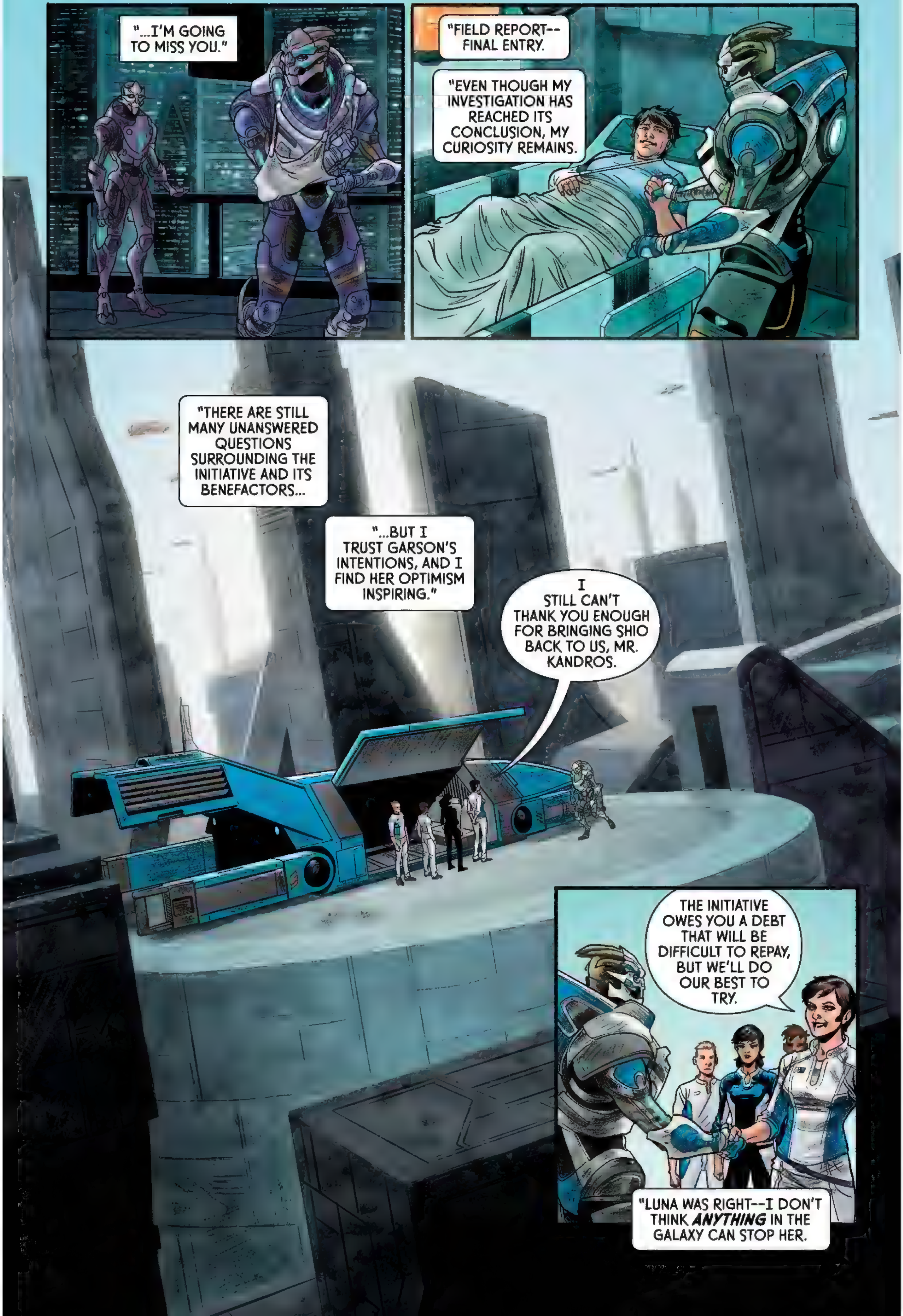

FWA-ZERKK
BOSH'TET!
DON'T STOP WORKING! WE'LL KEEP THEM OFF OF YOU!
"WHEN MY MISSION BEGAN, NEVER IN MY WILDEST IMAGINATION DID I EXPECT IT TO PUSH ME HERE.
"THIS IS BEYOND LOYALTY AND DUTY...THIS IS THRILLING!"
MY AMPLIFIERS ARE KILLING ME!
YOU HAVE TO SHOW ME HOW TO USE THE TECHNOLOGY HERE TO SAVE MYSELF! PLEASE!
"BUT IN MY EXCITEMENT, I FORGET WE'RE STILL STANDING NEXT TO A ***TIME BOMB.***"

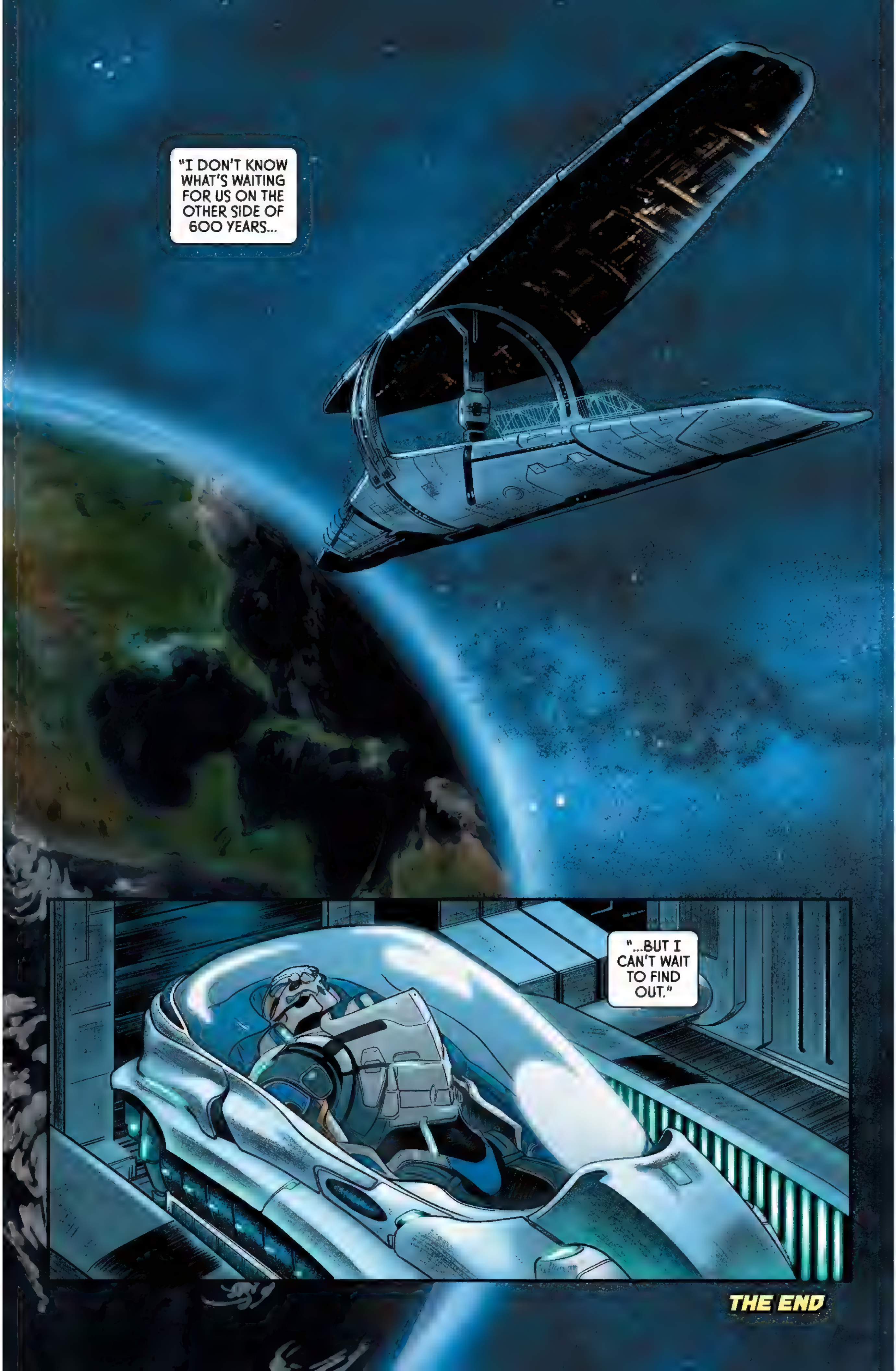

BIOTICS ARE ORGANIC--THE GETH MAKE NO ACCOUNT FOR THEM. I DO NOT KNOW WHAT YOU EXPECTED TO FIND HERE...
...BUT THERE **IS NO** TECHNOLOGY HERE TO AID YOU, I AM SORRY!
KANDROS! I HAVE THE COORDINATES!
ZETA! **OLAN!** I CAN'T DO THIS WITHOUT YOU!
OLAN? THEY SAID WE CAN NEVER, **EVER** SAY THAT NAME AGAIN...
WHAT DID THEY DO TO ME?!
WWA-WHOOMP
CAN YOU KEEP IT TOGETHER LONG ENOUGH TO HELP ME CLEAR A PATH?
NO...I CAN'T.
BUT IF YOU WANT TO MAKE IT OUT OF HERE ALIVE...
...RUN.


"UP UNTIL NOW, MY ENTIRE LIFE HAS BEEN SHAPED TO SERVE THE HIERARCHY.
"I WOULD HAVE GLADLY LAID IT DOWN TO UPHOLD MY FAMILY NAME.
"BUT HERE, IN THE FACE OF DEATH... WITH SO MUCH ON THE LINE...
"...I WANT TO LIVE.
"I WANT TO SEE WHAT'S OUT THERE BEYOND EVERYTHING WE KNOW.
"I WANT *MY OWN* ADVENTURE."


HOW DO YOU PLEAD TO THESE CHARGES, LIEUTENANT?
GUILTY.
I TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY ACTIONS AND ACCEPT WHATEVER PUNISHMENT THIS BODY DEEMS APPROPRIATE.
THE TESTIMONY FROM JIEN GARSON ON YOUR BEHALF WAS VERY PERSUASIVE.
HOWEVER, INSUBORDINATION CANNOT BE WITHOUT CONSEQUENCE.
YOU ARE HEREBY DISCHARGED WITHOUT HONOR, EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY.
UNDERSTOOD, SIR.


WHEN DO YOU LEAVE?
SOON. I'VE VOLUNTEERED FOR DUTY ON THE ***NEXUS.***
WE'RE HEADING INTO ANDROMEDA FIRST TO GET EVERYTHING READY FOR THE ARKS.
DON'T THROW EVERYTHING AWAY LIKE THIS.
YOU COULD STILL WORK WITH US AS A CIVILIAN CONTRACTOR.
OR I CAN GO WHERE I CAN DO THE MOST GOOD.
GARSON'S INITIATIVE IS GUTSY, BUT IT'S GOING TO NEED ALL THE HELP IT CAN GET.
TIRAN...YOU CAN'T HELP BEING WHO YOU ARE, CAN YOU?
I CAN'T HELP BEING YOUR SON.
YOU ALWAYS SAID I'D GET TO WRITE MY OWN CHAPTER IN KANDROS HISTORY...
...THIS IS MY CHANCE TO START A WHOLE NEW BOOK.
MY ONLY REGRET IS THAT I'LL NEVER GET TO READ IT.
SAFE TRAVELS, MY SON...


"...I'M GOING TO MISS YOU."
"FIELD REPORT--FINAL ENTRY.
"EVEN THOUGH MY INVESTIGATION HAS REACHED ITS CONCLUSION, MY CURIOSITY REMAINS.
"THERE ARE STILL MANY UNANSWERED QUESTIONS SURROUNDING THE INITIATIVE AND ITS BENEFACTORS...
"...BUT I TRUST GARSON'S INTENTIONS, AND I FIND HER OPTIMISM INSPIRING."
I STILL CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR BRINGING SHIO BACK TO US, MR. KANDROS.
THE INITIATIVE OWES YOU A DEBT THAT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO REPAY, BUT WE'LL DO OUR BEST TO TRY.
"LUNA WAS RIGHT--I DON'T THINK *ANYTHING* IN THE GALAXY CAN STOP HER.


"I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WAITING FOR US ON THE OTHER SIDE OF 600 YEARS...
"...BUT I CAN'T WAIT TO FIND OUT."
THE END

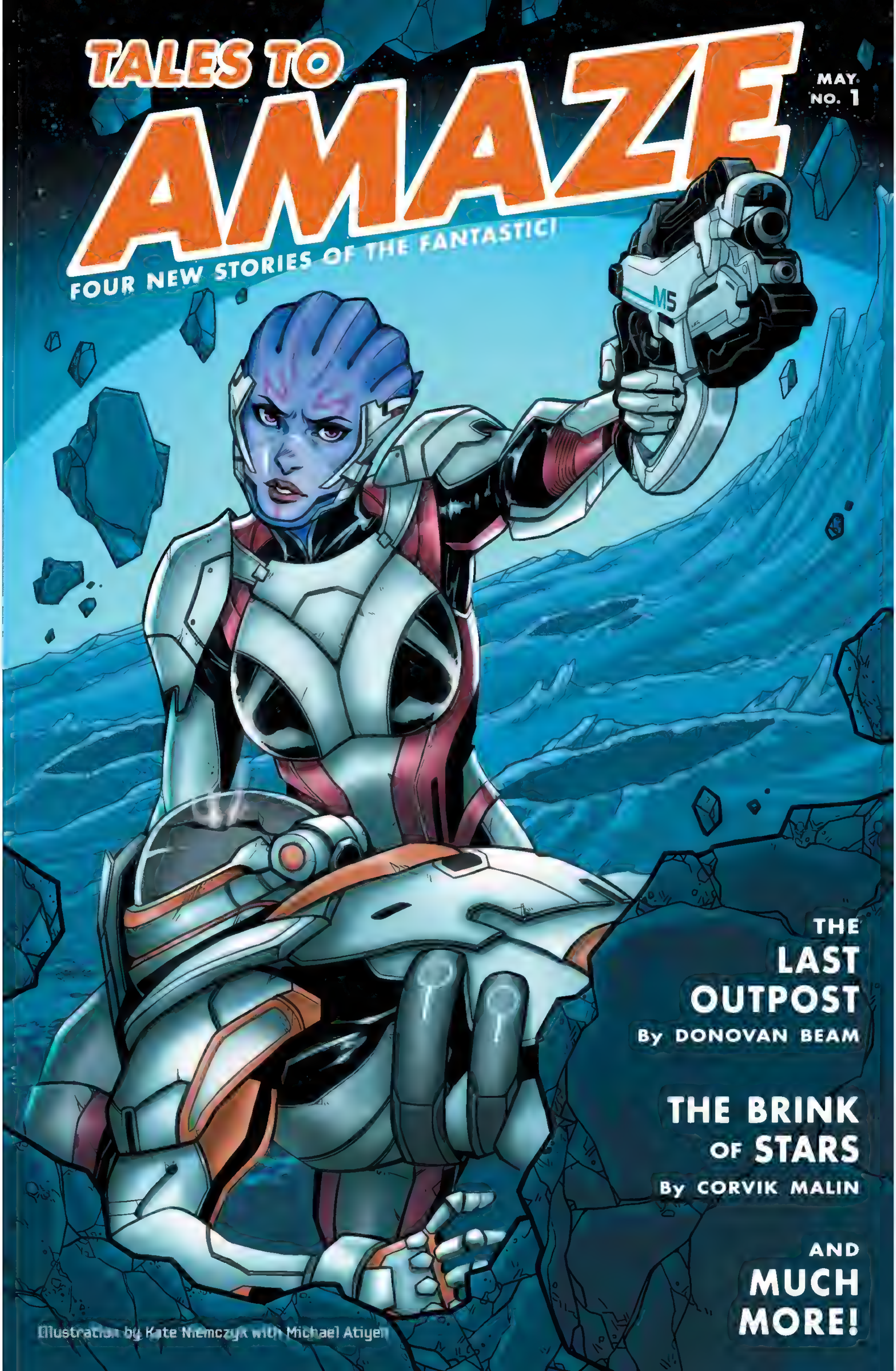

TALES TO
AMAZE
MAY
NO. 1
FOUR NEW STORIES OF THE FANTASTIC!
M5
THE LAST OUTPOST
By DONOVAN BEAM
THE BRINK OF STARS
By CORVIK MALIN
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Illustration by Kate Niemczyk with Michael Atiyeh

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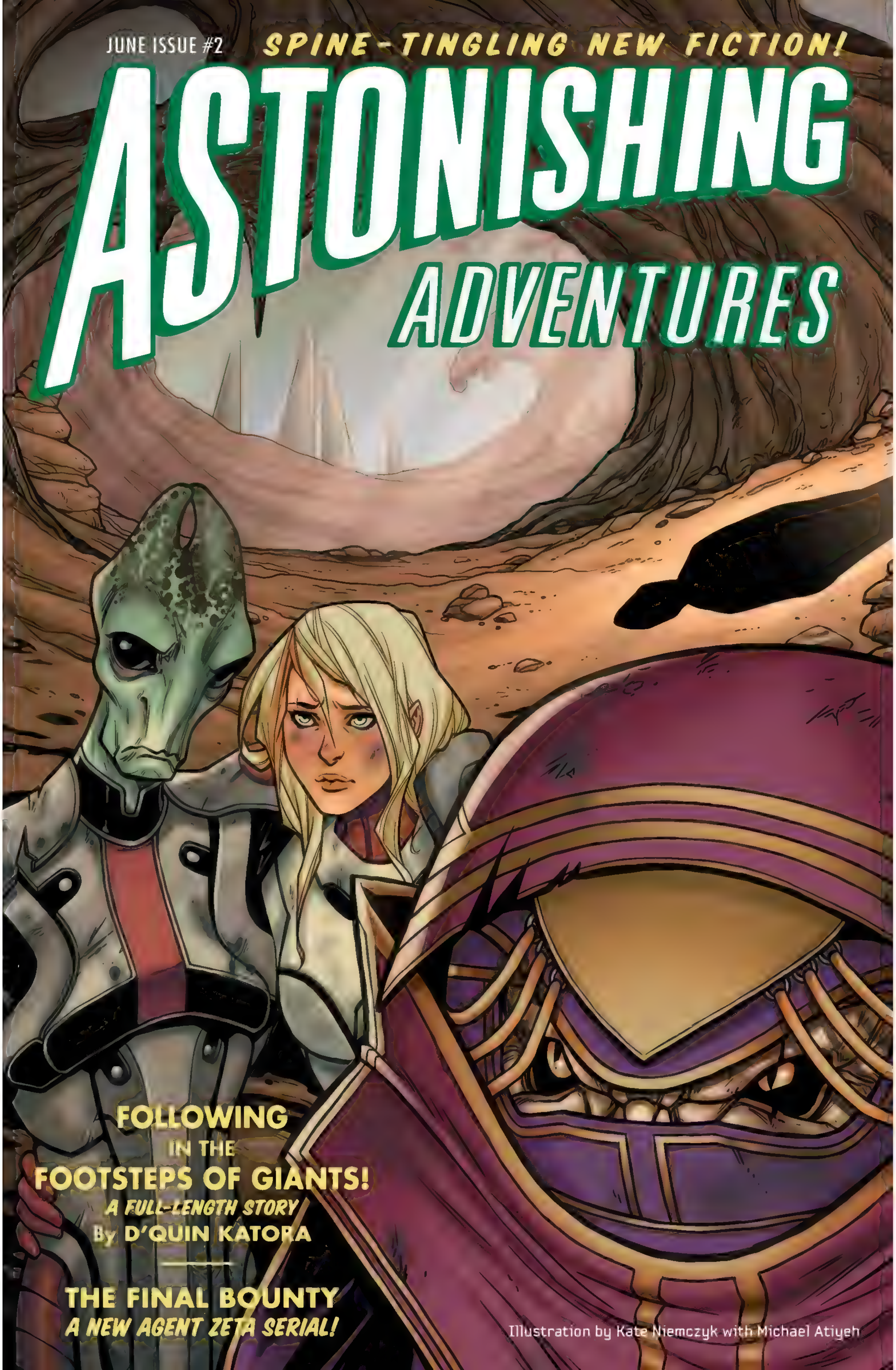
SPINE-TINGLING NEW FICTION!

ASTONISHING ADVENTURES



FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF GIANTS!

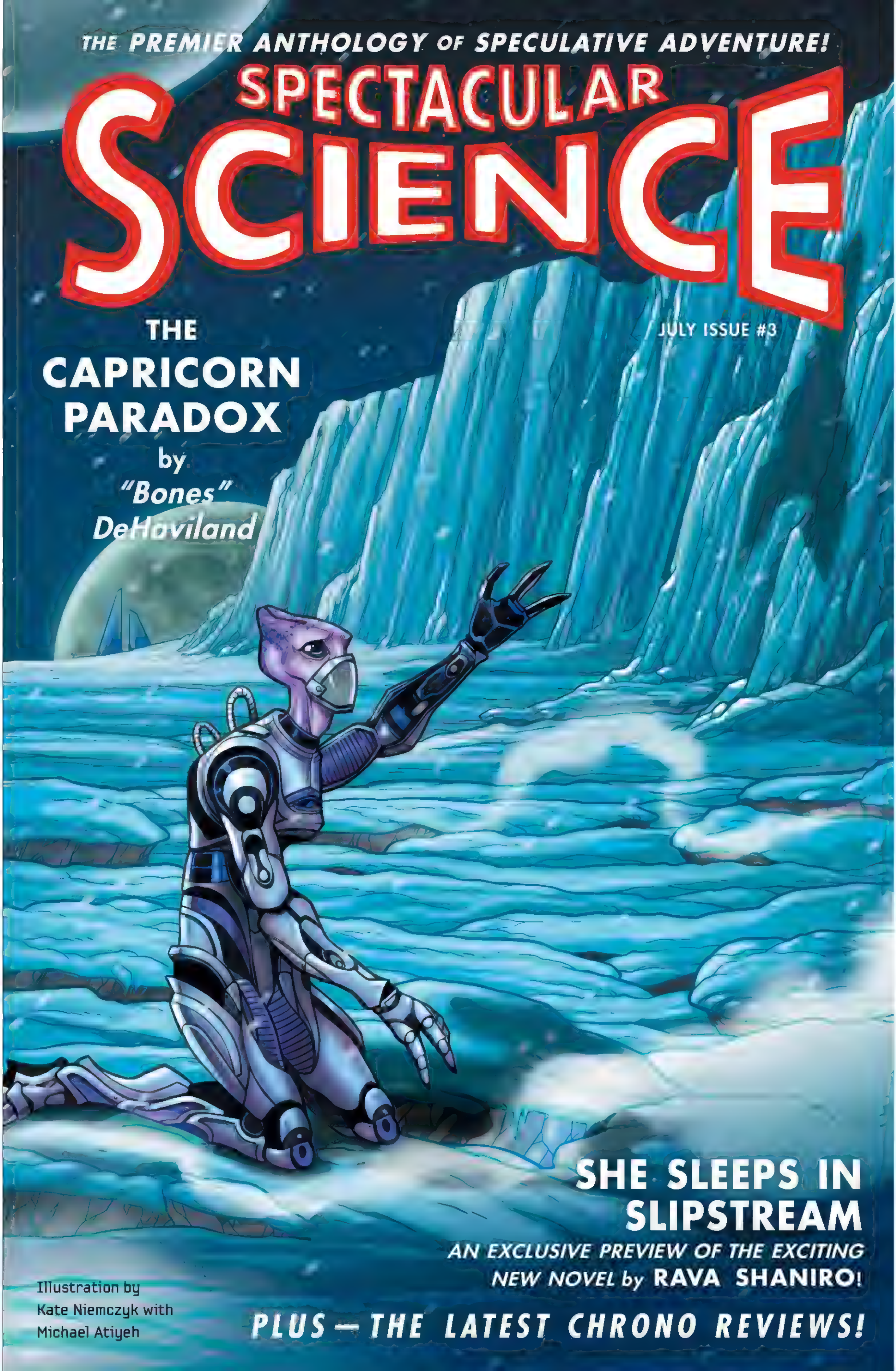
A FULL-LENGTH STORY

By D'QUIN KATORA

THE FINAL BOUNTY

A NEW AGENT ZETA SERIAL!

Illustration by Kate Niemczyk with Michael Atiyeh



THE PREMIER ANTHOLOGY OF SPECULATIVE ADVENTURE!

SPECTACULAR SCIENCE

JULY ISSUE #3

THE CAPRICORN PARADOX

by "Bones" DeHaviland

SHE SLEEPS IN SLIPSTREAM

AN EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW OF THE EXCITING NEW NOVEL by **RAVA SHANIRO!**

PLUS — THE LATEST CHRONO REVIEWS!

Illustration by Kate Niemczyk with Michael Atiyeh

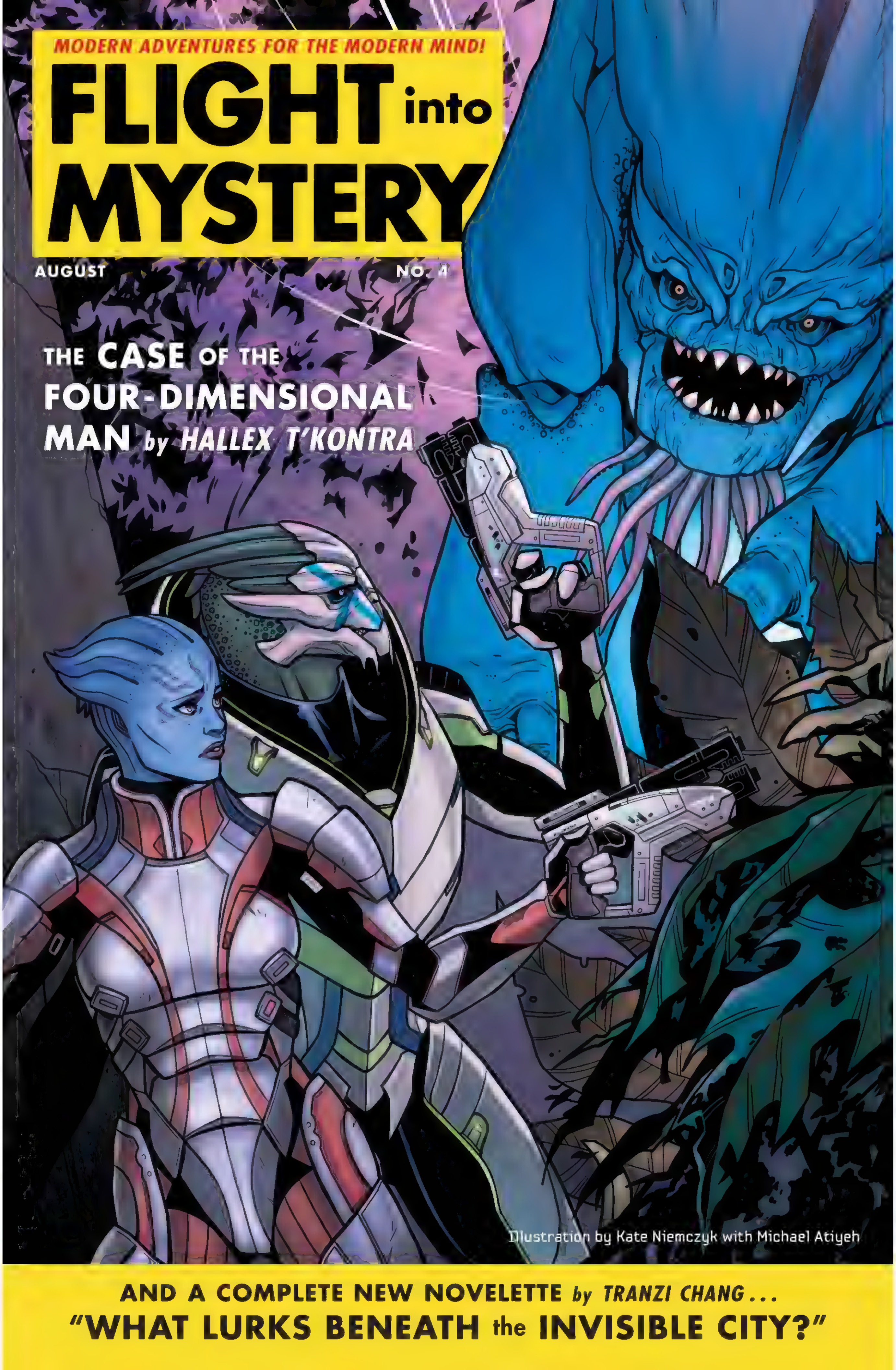

MODERN ADVENTURES FOR THE MODERN MIND!
FLIGHT into MYSTERY
AUGUST
NO. 4
THE CASE OF THE FOUR-DIMENSIONAL MAN by HALLEX T'KONTRA
AND A COMPLETE NEW NOVELETTE by TRANZI CHANG...
"WHAT LURKS BENEATH the INVISIBLE CITY?"

Illustration by Kate Niemczyk with Michael Atiyeh

Illustration by Benjamin Carré

Illustration by Benjamin Carré

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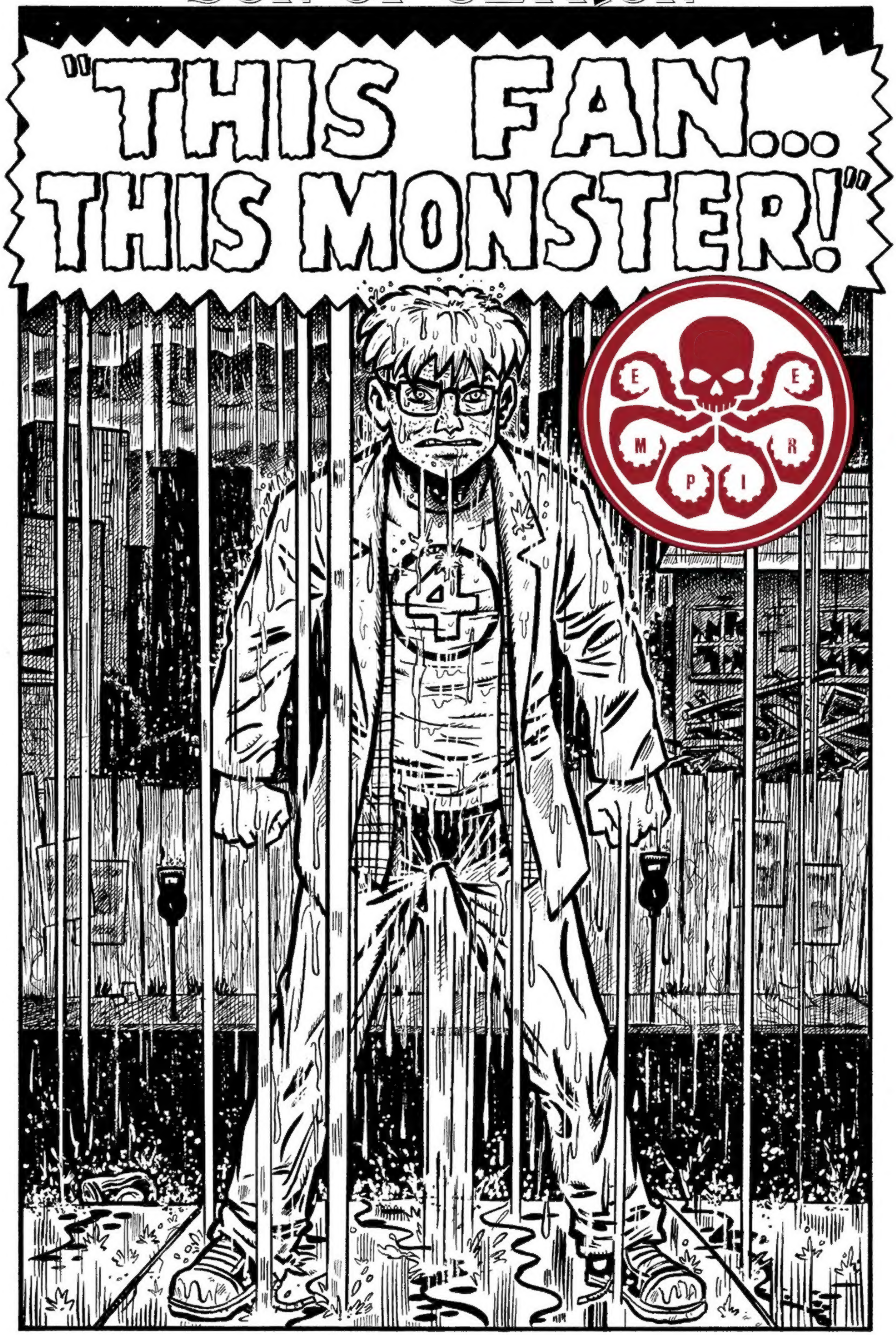
SON OF ULTRON


"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"